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THE BEAT OF THE WING* (LE COUP D'AILE)

(A play in three acts)

BY FRANÇOIS DE CUREL

Translated from the French by Alice Van Kaathoven

CHARACTERS

MICHEL PRINSON.

BERNARD PRINSON.

COLONEL HÉROUARD.

THE FLAG BEARER.

CHARLES, A SERVANT.

HÉLÈNE FROMENT.

CLOTILDE PRINSON (wife of Bernard).

JEANNE PRINSON, her daughter.

MATHILDE RENTY.

AMÉLIE, her daughter.

The three acts take place in a large room serving both as hall and smoking-room, in a villa built on a high cliff overlooking the sea. At the rear runs a gallery enclosed in glass, which, on the left, leads to the other rooms; to the right a small enclosed vestibule leads to the front door. The gallery communicates with the hall by two steps, the vestibule by three. Through the panes of glass in the rear, at the left, an unlimited stretch of ocean is seen, and at the right, smiling hills surrounding a bay. Through the glass at the right the same hills are seen studded with villas and their surrounding grounds, and immediately outside the window the garden is perceived, separated from the road by an iron grille with a gate.

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THE BEAT OF THE WING

ACT I

SCENE I

CLOTILDE, JEANNE

It is six o'clock in the morning. CLOTILDE and JEANNE, in tea gown are following with their eyes, the manœuvres of a mimic battle taking place on the beach. Outside loud reports of musketry are heard, some at close range and some at a distance. The sound of a furious cannonading proceeding from the sea drowns at times other sounds.

Jeanne (looking through the window panes at the rear, calling to her mother, who at the other end of the gallery is looking in the opposite direction).— Mother! Mother! Hurry. Here is something new!

Clotilde (after looking through her field glasses again).— I see nothing.

Jeanne.— Really? Follow with your glass along the hedge.

Clotilde (after a fresh inspection).— I have them! What eyes you have! I supposed the French were holding that corner.

Jeanne (in a tone of charitable superiority).— Mother, you make me feel sorry for you! You have not a bit of strategic instinct. Don't you see that Mme. Rochet's grounds are filled with white cuffs? The British are everywhere! *(The cannonading at sea becomes appalling. Enter MATHILDE and her daughter, AMÉLIE.)*

SCENE II

CLOTILDE, JEANNE, MATHILDE, AMÉLIE

Mathilde.— Dear friend, isn't this really too informal? To come to see people when the sun is scarcely up?

Clotilde (moving toward her and shaking her hand).— On the contrary, dear friend, too late! The performance began near midnight and is almost over. *(Embracing AMÉLIE while MATHILDE shakes the hand of JEANNE.)* Good morning, Amélie!

Amélie.— Good morning, madame! Permit me! *(She runs to the gallery in the rear.)* Where must one look?

Jeanne.— There isn't much left to see.

Mathilde.— According to what we were told at Jossigny-by-the-Sea, the sea of the manœuvre is that an army from England is attempting to disembark on our coast.

Jeanne.— Yes. Fancy! These ships you see are the British flotilla. They are supposed to have landed an army corps on our coast. (*Interrupting herself to look at the armed men whose firing increases.*) What are they up to? What if they were fresh torpedoes?

Amélie.— You saw the torpedoes?

Jeanne.— A superb attack! I scarcely breathed!

Amélie.— And you think more are coming?

Jeanne.— No! False alarm!

Mathilde.— One thing I can't understand is the fact of their allowing the invaders to land. It would have been so easy for the soldiers to have prevented the boats from landing!

Clotilde.— There weren't any soldiers. The troops were mobilized long way from here. The army trains were arriving all night.

Jeanne.— To prevent the landing there were exactly eight custom-house officials, not another one! (*The sound of clarions is heard echoing from hill to hill all along the coast, and at the same instant, cannon and musetry, which toward the last had been going off at rarer intervals, now ceases completely.*)

Amélie.— What does that music mean?

Mathilde.— It is evidently the signal to stop firing, for it *does* stop.

Clotilde.— Ouf! (*They all return to the interior of the apartment.*) It seems quite strange not to hear that perpetual rumbling any more. My head has all gone to pieces, but, never mind, a sight like that is worth seeing. To JEANNE.) What a pity your father was detained in Paris!

Jeanne (laughing).— On the contrary, I find it very lucky that he is away. The generals would have eaten him alive. After Monday's speech! Just think! The deputy who persuaded the chamber to reduce the war appropriation one fifth. The beplumed ones are not satisfied.

Mathilde.— Plenty of others are! What a success, dear friend! How much I must congratulate you. Some day you will be the wife of the president of the Republic, you will see! (*CHARLES brings a telegram to CLOTILDE. He waits, while his mistress opens and reads it.*)

Clotilde.— Oh! Children! What joy! Jeanne! Your father is coming.

Jeanne.— To-day, mother?

Clotilde.— This morning, at once. (*Reading the telegram.*) 'I hear at the Ministry that we are having some fine manœuvres along our coast.

I leave at once and will arrive to-morrow morning in time to admire and receive our valiant soldiers. Hélène will be with me. Have the eight o'clock train met.' (*To CHARLES.*) Go to the stable and tell them to send to the station for monsieur. (*CHARLES exit.*)

Jeanne.—Hélène? Mother, who is she? We do not know anything of Hélène intimately.

Clotilde.—I do not know her any better than you do, but I know what she is. She is a young girl, without either father or mother, in whom your father is interested, and for whom I believe he is also guardian. I am told she is charming.

Jeanne.—My age?

Clotilde.—About your age, I think.

Jeanne.—Will she be here long?

Clotilde.—Her arrival is a surprise. I know nothing of her plans.

Jeanne.—If she is nice she will be a playfellow for me. (*To AMÉLIE.*) Will you go to the station with me? So many people talk to my father. You will prevent my being left alone with Hélène.

Amélie.—Will you let me, mother?

Mathilde.—Go along, we will wait to shake the orator's hand.

Clotilde (to JEANNE).—On your way tell the servants to prepare the end room for Miss Hélène. Hurry, or the carriage will leave without you.

Jeanne (to AMÉLIE).—Come along, let us make haste!

(*JEANNE and AMÉLIE leave.*)

SCENE III

CLOTILDE, MATHILDE

Clotilde.—Now we are alone. Tell me frankly what you think of my husband's speech.

Mathilde.—Mine thinks it a splendid speech, though rather dangerous.

Clotilde.—Dangerous for whom?

Mathilde (surprised).—Why! For the country! Whom else could it affect?

Clotilde.—The orator himself.

Mathilde.—I do not understand. The Chamber voted everything he wanted. His triumph is complete.

Clotilde.—It was not taken as well here as in Paris, and his electors are here.

Mathilde.—Yes, in our department the people are rather skittish in their patriotism.

Clotilde.— Just think! The Saint Leger foundry, which turns out war material exclusively, employs more than ten thousand workmen. They are furious at my husband, whom they accuse of destroying their means of livelihood by reducing the war appropriation. You can imagine how our antagonists will take advantage of the opportunity and pour oil on the flames. The most atrocious article has already appeared in a local paper. If any more such insinuations come out, Bernard's position will be impossible to maintain.

Mathilde.— I did not know about the article. How was it atrocious?

Clotilde.— It brought to light the great misfortune that has stricken our family. It stirred up all that baneful past.

Mathilde.— I am at sea. What is there in Mr. Prinson's past?

Clotilde.— His brother.

Mathilde.— True! That odious Michel! For years his name has never entered my mind.

Clotilde.— We do everything to make the world forget it. This wretched speech has stirred up that evil memory. You can understand why I am troubled. When you bear the same name as that of a creature who lost his country so dear, you cannot speak with contempt of warlike virtues. One may look into the reduction in wine sales, the revenue tax, the clergy; but one must leave the army alone. Moreover, I'll wager that Bernard is sorry for his overflow of eloquence. His telegram proves it. You will read it to-morrow in the papers.

Mathilde.— It is very cleverly worded. It will make a good impression. (*Silence.*) What a scourge Michel is! Ten years since his death, and still he does harm!

SCENE IV

MATHILDE, CLOTILDE, JEANNE, AMÉLIE

The two girls rush in suddenly by the garden door. They appear much disturbed and out of breath from running.

Jeanne (to her mother, in a broken voice).— Mother! We could not go to the station. At the opening of the path we were stopped by a man — a horrible man — who frightened us so!

Clotilde.— Was he begging? Was he impudent? Did he threaten you?

Jeanne.— No, not exactly impudent — nor did he threaten either.

Amélie.— He isn't a beggar, he is nicely dressed.

Mathilde.— Well! What did he want?

Jeanne.— We do not know. We were almost upon him without seeing him, because he was seated in the grass at the extreme edge of the cliff! He

must have been watching us for some time. I was ahead, all of a sudden I stood before me and for a good minute he stared me in the face. Then I asked me, 'Are you the daughter of Bernard Prinson?' He said it such a way! We flew off like arrows and ran all the way home.

*Mathilde (pressing her hand over her daughter's brow).—*How hot you are! To put yourself in such a state for a trifle!

*Jeanne.—*If you had seen his face you would not say — 'for a trifle' — a face covered with scars, hacked up, lined, carved, and in it all a pair of eyes that looked as if they had been torn out and put back again by chance, eyes burning with rage and fever. As to the man, I am convinced he could knock down any opponent whatever with one hand. I never saw anything so hideous or so terrible.

*Clotilde (smiling).—*What a picture! And to think that no doubt represents a very worthy man!

*Jeanne.—*As to that, indeed, mother, I could swear it does not! He cannot be a worthy man! (*The crunching of the gravel outside is heard as the carriage approaches.*)

*Clotilde.—*Your father! (*JEANNE exclaims joyfully and runs to the doorstep. At the same moment the glass door is opened and BERNARD PRINSON enters, followed by HÉLÈNE.*)

SCENE V

MATHILDE, CLOTILDE, JEANNE, AMÉLIE, BERNARD, HÉLÈNE

*Jeanne (throwing her arms around her father's neck).—*Father, let me salute you! (*She kisses him upon his right cheek.*) This for you! (*She kisses him on his left cheek.*) This for your beautiful speech!

*Clotilde (embracing her husband).—*Did you have a pleasant journey?

*Bernard (while a servant helps him off with his hat and coat, which the servant carries away with him).—*Excellent! I sleep in a car as well as in my bed (*Motioning toward HÉLÈNE.*) Here is a young person who must be rested, for she did not close her eyes all night. (*Taking HÉLÈNE by the shoulder and pushing her toward his wife.*) Let me introduce you. She is very sweet and can argue with great maturity. We talked very little last night in the dining-car, but I discovered that much.

*Clotilde (giving her hand to HÉLÈNE).—*Mademoiselle, you are welcome. I hope you will be happy here. (*HÉLÈNE bows timidly.*)

*Bernard (pushing HÉLÈNE toward JEANNE).—*Jeanne, I place her in your care. (*JEANNE smiles at HÉLÈNE and takes her a little aside, attempting meanwhile to converse. AMÉLIE joins them, after BERNARD, in passing, having given her a friendly shake of the hand.*)

Mathilde (shaking BERNARD's hand).—You find the house invaded, not by the enemy, but by indiscreet friends. We have been here since dawn to see the battle.

Bernard.—Was it fine?

Clotilde.—Splendid! We spent the night at the window.

Bernard (laughing).—We shall discover shortly that after having made our hundred kilometers since last night I am the freshest of you all. (*After pause he says to CLOTILDE*), I have news for you. After leaving the station I had the carriage stop at the mayor's, where I learned that we are to put up Colonel Hérouard, of the 170th infantry. He is coming at once.

Clotilde.—The troops, then, do not return to the garrison to-day?

Bernard.—No. The manœuvres will last several days and the soldiers remain stationed in the neighborhood.

Jeanne (clapping her hands).—Oh! What luck! Another battle!

Bernard (smiling).—By Jove! The daughter of the most pacific of all the deputies indulging in such Valkyrie enthusiasm!

Clotilde (laughing).—The Valkyrie has just been sadly routed!

Jeanne (mortified).—Oh! Mother!

Clotilde.—What might be called a rout! (*To BERNARD.*) She started to go to meet you, and a hundred yards away from the house some old codger asks her if she is not the daughter of Bernard Prinson. Instead of replying she takes to her heels, and we were present at her anything but triumphal entry.

Jeanne.—If he had appeared to mother I should like to know what she would have done. That 'old codger' indeed. I defy any one to look at him and not be afraid.

Bernard (becoming very intent).—Old or young?

Jeanne.—He is so marked up it is not possible to tell. Not very old, at any rate.

Bernard.—After asking you if you were my daughter what else did he say?

Clotilde (laughing).—If he said anything more, she was far away. A servant appears and makes a sign to CLOTILDE.) Coffee is served. If you will go into the dining-room (*to MATHILDE*). Dear friend, you must be dying of hunger after such an early start?

Mathilde.—Not at all. We breakfasted before leaving, and now that we have found our deputy in good health we are going to run away. I also have to receive some officers and I must see they are properly housed. I am putting up two lieutenants who, no doubt, will have comrades in the neighborhood, and I intend to ask all these young people to tea this afternoon. We shall have a little dance. Don't fail to come.

Clotilde.— We accept with the greatest pleasure. (*MATHILDE and AMÉLIE shake BERNARD's hand. CLOTILDE accompanies her visitors as far as the doorstep. BERNARD prevents JEANNE from following.*)

Bernard (to JEANNE).— Show Miss Froment to the dining-room and tell them to bring me my coffee here. I must speak to your mother.

Jeanne (to HÉLÈNE).— Come, let us both go. (*HÉLÈNE and JEANNE exeunt. At the same instant CLOTILDE returns.*)

SCENE VI

CLOTILDE, BERNARD

Bernard.— The man of whom Jeanne is so afraid, guess who it is!

Clotilde.— Who is it?

Bernard.— Michel!

Clotilde.— Your brother?

Bernard.— Yes.

Clotilde.— What makes you think so?

Bernard.— A line I received from him yesterday in which he announced his proposed visit. It is he!

Clotilde.— But he swore never to return to France.

Bernard.— First, he swore nothing of the kind, and, besides, oaths to him, you know —

Clotilde.— Yet, when he came back from Africa he was absolutely at your mercy. You ought to have taken advantage of it to bar his way.

Bernard.— How do you mean, 'to bar his way'?

Clotilde.— We were sure he was dead. The papers throughout the entire world had described his sufferings at length and counted the wounds on his dead body. An official notice of your brother's death had given you leave to inherit his fortune. Who compelled you to return it to him as you did? Nobody. One owes nothing to a corpse. I understood when we decided upon restitution that you took a formal guarantee.

Bernard.— You misunderstood. For two years we were sure of my brother's death, when a man named Rénaud wrote me from London that he was that brother, miraculously escaped from his executioners through numberless dangers. He told merrily — for this bad penny always has had a sense of humor — of his crossing as stoker in the steamboat carrying him to England, and of his battle with hunger during the first few months. It was the middle of winter, and he had had the luck to land during a week of heavy snowstorms and been engaged as an extra sweeper at a street crossing. After the thaw he was engaged as a scrubber in an office in the city, where

thanks to his knowledge of the French language, he was promoted to the position of clerk. It is then that Mr. Rénaud, small employee in a London bank, wrote to me, for no other reason, I verily believe, than to show off his success in defying death. He asked nothing — nothing. His whole pride lay in his endurance in overcoming all things, even fate. At that time, my political prospects were growing and they had not greatly suffered from Michel's disgrace. He having paid for his treachery with his life, we were quits. At any price it was necessary to prevent him from coming to life again. I deposited to Mr. Rénaud's credit in London the equivalent of what I had inherited from my brother. Mr. Rénaud, touched by the proceeding, answered that Michel Prinson was dead. Mark that! He never promised not to appear in France. Michel dead, that's all.

Clotilde.—How does he dare to risk himself in France? If he gets caught, a pirate, an assassin, a traitor, it means the guillotine.

Bernard.—Not at all. His crime committed ten years ago is outlawed. That is doubtless what makes him bold enough to return. He can come and go without danger.

Clotilde.—Charming! All the danger is yours!

Bernard (smiling).—He would receive his share if he were recognized, or he would be treated like a mad dog. Just the same it would not prevent me from being in a nice scrape. The presence at my side of such a brother would be exploited in the choicest terms.

Clotilde.—All the more so, that Michel is arriving at a critical period. Your speech was a marvel. I congratulate you heartily. Yet I feel somehow that you went too far, and that in your particular position it would be better not to concern yourself with the army.

Bernard.—To whom are you talking? I have made myself the apostle of peace whom every one praises just the same as if my constituents did not earn their bread by manufacturing war implements.

Clotilde.—An enormous mistake, my friend!

Bernard.—But, heaven bless me! If you want to command great occasions you must learn how to lose sight of your own town clock for an instant. No danger, though, but there is a mistake! Since Monday I have been receiving mountains of letters and telegrams, all of them furious. The most formidable thing is the fact that all of them refer to Michel at precisely the moment when he reappears.

Clotilde.—Your correspondents are inspired by an odious article in *La Vie*, unearthing your brother's whole history.

Bernard.—I read the article. Well, the harm is done; let us try to remedy it. I have already begun. As I passed through the town I stopped

at the mayor's to ask them to allow me to put up one of the superior officers.
Clotilde (laughing).— You asked them! To Madame Renty you say you had been notified you were to put up.

Bernard.— Jingo! She does not have to be initiated into all my little secrets. (*A servant brings in a tray on which are coffee, rolls, and butter. During the remainder of the scene and the scene following BERNARD breakfasts very slowly.*) Yes, I asked for it and I did well, the clerk assured me that had I not requested it no one would have been sent to us. Well! We have the colonel! None of the generals stay at Jossigny. Had there been one, he would have been for us.

Clotilde.— I know a colonel who is going to be beautifully spoiled. Not only your brother, by causing some scandal, does not ruin everything! He certainly runs great danger of being recognized. In the days of his glory his picture appeared in all the papers. His face was familiar. Besides, how many people saw him! At that reception, organized in his honor when he returned for the first time from Africa, millions of people crowded the Trocadéro. During the entire afternoon every one's eyes were riveted upon him. Because he was interesting, the rascal! Do you remember? When he almost fainted from emotion? From every woman's lips came a little cry of tenderness. Ah! He would not have found many cruel women that night in Paris. After having been for a whole day the idol of his country, how could he pass unnoticed?

Bernard.— Jeanne has just seen him face to face; did she recognize him? I have no fear on that score. When he announced his visit, he sent me his photograph to reassure me, and, indeed, he is not himself any more.

Clotilde.— Oh! Show me his picture!

Bernard.— After a while; it is in my valise. But here is the letter I have just received. (*He pulls from his pocket an envelope which he hands to her.*)

Clotilde.— A card! He did not have much to say! (*Looking at the post mark.*) From Geneva. (*Drawing the card out of the envelope and reading:*) 'Mr. Rénard desiring to have a talk with the deputy Prinson proposes to spend the first fortnight of July at Jossigny-by-the-Sea, known by the papers that the Prinson family live there. He hopes that the fortnight will not elapse without his finding an occasion to meet Mr. Prinson and he will have the honor to present himself several times at his door. He takes the liberty of sending his photograph, in order that Mr. Prinson may be entirely convinced that Mr. Rénard's face will arouse no memory of a physiognomy odious to all good Frenchmen.' Always the same cynicism! Still, the tone is not threatening. The insistence with which he calls himself Rénard, the care he takes in establishing the fact that he is unrecognizable, are good signs. But, in the end, what does he want?

Bernard.— I do not know, but whatever it is, one can be sure that he will make his request known without a vestige of family feeling causing his heart to beat at the idea of seeing us again. After reading those lines, my resolution was made at once to return; I did not wish to leave you alone, even for a day, with that pirate for a neighbor. And then, not knowing to what saint to confide myself, I took the bull by the horns, and brought his laughter.

Clotilde.— How do you expect to revive a paternal sentiment that never existed?

Bernard.— I hope for something quite different. His daughter, whom he did not want when she was a burden, perhaps he might welcome when she could be a comfort. Why, if Michel is suffering from loneliness, would it not occur to him to take this gentle, well brought up creature away with him?

Clotilde.— How would that help us?

Bernard (laughing).— First, to rid ourselves of her, and then, under such circumstances, to fear Michel less. A man who leads a life apart, hostile and indifferent to everything, is hard to approach in a critical situation. See how different, were he to come accompanied by Hélène! We could know through her what his plans were. We could negotiate through her, profit by her influence. Instead of treating with a kind of demon, I could be facing a rogue more or less like other men. Eh! When I hesitate to burden myself with Hélène! Do you remember? I might perfectly well have dispensed with that charge. My brother's natural daughter,— that would not count. But the curate of the village in which Hélène's mother had just died wrote me letter after letter. He compared me to Jean Jacques making foundlings of his family. Such tales as those are mines of blackmail. A democratic leader ought to be able to take his part in the discussion of these subjects, such as the legalized search for paternity, without risking unpleasant references. Rather against my will I did a worthy deed, and now I am repaid, since the presence of Hélène is, to a certain extent, a safeguard.

Clotilde.— Do not boast too much of your worthy deed. During the eight years since that child has been in boarding school have you ever asked three times to see her?

Bernard (laughing).— Certainly not more.

Clotilde.— As for me, I should have been glad to have done something for her, but you forbade it.

Bernard.— I considered any connection between her and my family useless and dangerous. Only an unknown danger now threatening me decided me to bring her into relationship with you.

Clotilde.— I should like to avoid any mistakes. Tell me does she know that Michel is her father?

Bernard (quickly).— The devil, no! Be careful! Plenty of time to enlighten her, if Michel becomes interested. Moreover it will be M. Rênaud, never Michel.

Clotilde.— Well, in regard to her birth, what does she think?

Bernard.— Her mother and herself deserted at her birth by a father of whose name she is ignorant. Moreover, I have given her to understand that I watched over her education as president of a society for the protection of children.

Clotilde.— The girl is quite pretty, but her face has a hard look. Her character may be the sort not always easy to manage. If she is a bit queer it is no wonder, for she hasn't much to thank life for. What must she be thinking this minute? For eight years you leave her shut up, then all of a sudden you carry her off, drop her into a fine carriage, lead her into a charming villa. 'And this is my house! I hope you will be happy here. This is my wife, my daughter.' What a muddle in her brain! Didn't she ask you any questions while you were traveling?

Bernard.— It was I who questioned her. In spite of my preference for secular education, I placed her with the sisters in the hope that at the end of her term she might take the veil. Those vocations are a good thing sometimes.

Clotilde.— Just now such a vocation would interfere with your plan of attaching her to Michel.

Bernard.— Neither do I now want the cloister for her. It is precisely to enlighten myself in regard to her tastes that I have been cleverly questioning her. Well! Fancy! Two years ago she really did think of taking the veil. But the curious part of it was she did not wish to enter the order of the sisters by whom she had been brought up.

Clotilde.— What order did she select?

Bernard.— I do not know. We were talking while at dinner and a colleague of the Chamber, who asked if he could sit at our table, ended our interview. Here she is. (*HÉLÈNE enters with JEANNE.*)

SCENE VII

CLOTILDE, BERNARD, HÉLÈNE, JEANNE

Jeanne (comes up to her father caressingly).— My dear old papa, let me embrace you again! (*As she leans over his shoulder she notices that his cup of coffee has scarcely been touched.*)— Why! Your cup is still full! You

haven't taken three mouthfuls! Was it so very important, what you had to say? Shall I have the coffee brought back? Yours is cold.

Bernard.— Let it alone! I shall have finished it in a moment.

Jeanne.— To begin with you shan't get in a single word, I have too many things to tell you. (*She continues to talk to him in an undertone.*)

Clotilde (to HÉLÈNE).— If my husband has neglected his breakfast it is I who am to blame. I asked him so many questions! You can fancy about whom? About you, dear young lady. I have wanted often to look you up. I was not able to, but the intention was there. Believe me — I should be glad to be of use to you. I will have to know you a little better for that. But I hope you will trust me and tell me everything.

Hélène.— I should be only too glad to do so, but what is there to tell? There never was a past as blank as mine.

Clotilde.— Perhaps not filled with events. And yet! I have just learned that two years ago you had thought of taking the veil. That is certainly an event in the life of the soul! Were you really decided?

Hélène.— Yes — almost.

Clotilde.— Of course you would have entered the convent in which you were educated?

Hélène.— No, I wished to join the order of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Clotilde.— Your dream, at eighteen, was then to take care of the aged and infirm?

Hélène.— My dream! Oh! Not at all! My will.

Clotilde.— But why?

Hélène.— I was not happy. I had lost my mother who loved me deeply, and her affection had never been replaced. No one about me realized how lonely I was. So it was very simple. When you cannot be comforted yourself you feel a desire to comfort others.

Clotilde.— Does that seem plain to you?

Hélène.— It seems to me that — to comfort or be comforted — either one will warm the heart.

Clotilde.— You gave it up. Why?

Hélène.— I feared I should not persevere in it all my life. I am not good enough.

Clotilde.— Must one be so phenomenally good?

Hélène.— Yes, in some ways. All sorts of things happen. Fancy, for instance, if among all the old men entrusted to my care an enemy of mine were to come some day.

Clotilde.— An enemy! You have one then?

Hélène.— Perhaps, madame.

Clotilde.— You have no doubt of it, judging by your voice. What harm has been done you ?

Hélène.— My mother died of exhaustion from overwork — I grew up in a cellar.

Clotilde (embarrassed).— Then one must look close to you for ——

Hélène.— Yes, very close.

Clotilde (thinking herself implicated).— Yet those whom you accuse —

Hélène.— I accuse one only — there! My father. If I recognize him, even overwhelmed with illness, I could not forgive him. A true Christian spirit would manage to love him for God's sake.

Bernard (rising).— Come! Now I am well stocked! (*To JEANNE.* Ring for them to remove the tray. (*JEANNE pushes an electric button.*)

Clotilde (to JEANNE).— Did you show Mademoiselle her room ?

Jeanne (smiling at HÉLÈNE).— Not yet; I am going to now.

Clotilde (to HÉLÈNE).— I selected a room for you from which you can see the open sea. I suppose that until you came here you had never seen the ocean ?

Hélène.— Even here, madame, I have not yet seen it.

Jeanne (laughing).— It's true, where could she have seen it? She came in a carriage by way of the town, and at table her back was turned to the window. (*Slipping her arm in a friendly manner through HÉLÈNE's, she drags her to the gallery at the right.*) Look! (*HÉLÈNE, dumb with admiration, gazes at the sea, which glimmers in the bright sunlight.*)

Clotilde.— Do you not think it beautiful ?

Hélène.— Yes.

Jeanne.— Did you expect such immensity ?

Hélène.— My eyes are unused to any horizon greater than four walls. The immensity does not enter in. I scarcely have the sensation of seeing. I have above all the sensation of being able — yes, of being able to glide over all that, for days and days.

Bernard (laughing).— You think she is discovering the ocean? No at all, she is discovering liberty! (*At the same instant JEANNE, much disturbed, points with her finger to an individual walking along by the garden fence.*)

Jeanne.— Father! There is the man who frightened me so! He is looking at the house. (*BERNARD rushes to see whom she means.*) There — standing by the fence!

(*BERNARD, after a quick examination, joining CLOTILDE, talks to her in an undertone, while HÉLÈNE and JEANNE continue to watch the movement of the intruder.*)

Bernard.— It is indeed he! Leave us alone! I will keep Hélène and Jeanne for a moment — on account of Hélène — to show her to him — that he may know she is his daughter.

Jeanne.— He is coming into the garden. He has seen us! He is coming!

Bernard (very calmly).— Well! Let him come! I know him. He is a very worthy man! (*CLOTILDE leaves. HÉLÈNE and JEANNE start to follow.*) No. You two remain. And if he attempts to talk to you, instead of evading him, be pleasant and trusting. Do you hear me, Hélène? *As he pronounces the last words, he opens the front door and ushers in MICHEL, who appears tall, large, disfigured, horrible to behold. His face is at first half hidden by a broad-brimmed hat of soft felt pulled down over his eyes. When he has taken three strides into the room he removes it and the scars upon his brow are no longer concealed.*)

SCENE VIII

BERNARD, JEANNE, HÉLÈNE, MICHEL

Michel (very jovial, without stretching out his hand to BERNARD, presenting himself).— It is Mr. Rénaud! Good morning!

Bernard (without taking a step toward him and in a dull, even voice).— Good morning, Mr. Rénaud. This is my daughter, Jeanne.

Michel (always in the same buoyant tone).— Ah! Yes! She is not too angry with the great blockhead who frightened her? This time, eh! No way of hiding! Look at me well, Mademoiselle Jeanne! (*She looks him square in the face.*) Aha! That's good! Some progress has been made! (*Turning to HÉLÈNE.*) And this one — has she also regained her courage? Ah! But! I've made a mistake! (*To JEANNE.*) She is not the one you were with a short time ago?

Jeanne.— No, indeed.

Bernard (importantly).— I present you to Mademoiselle Hélène Froment.

Michel (struck by a memory).— Wait a minute! Froment! I know that name! I must have met the young lady before. (*HÉLÈNE makes a simple motion of denial.*) Yes, mademoiselle — but you were too small. You could not have formed an opinion about me. (*To BERNARD.*) I am in particularly good luck. The family united. Yet Madame Prinson is missing.

Bernard (nonplussed).— My wife is well, thank you! (*Motioning to JEANNE to retire with HÉLÈNE.*) My children, I must speak with Rénaud. *HÉLÈNE and JEANNE leave, after a bow to MICHEL.*)

SCENE IX

BERNARD, MICHEL, *then* CHARLES*Bernard (much disturbed).*— You, here, Michel!*Michel (jeering).*— Ah! You are very familiar with Mr. Rénaud!*Bernard.*— Enough comedy. If you wish to converse, do so seriously!*Michel.*— You are right; the best jokes are the shortest ones. From now on I am myself.*Bernard (anxious).*— Only with me, however.*Michel.*— Ah! Ah! Rénaud for the gallery and Michel for you! You are right to explain the difference; otherwise I'll be blessed if, to the first person entering —*Bernard.*— Yes, or no, are you here to make trouble for me?*Michel (amiably).*— What do you think! What pleasure should derive from making you trouble?*Bernard.*— You have a way of speaking —*Michel.*— Don't notice it. I am no longer in the habit — that is to say, I remain weeks, months, without speaking to any one, and when I find people to listen to they are not duchesses. Trouble? Drat it, no! You are too worthy a man! I arrive and who do I see established at your fireside, treated like your own daughter? Mine! She whom I rather shabbily deserted with her mother some time ago. Do you also house the mother?*Bernard.*— She is dead.*Michel.*— Too bad! That woman once loved me. It would be an amusing experience to meet one of my past flames. To run to her with outstretched arms and cry, 'I am your adored Michel!' (*Laughing heartily.*) With such a mug, eh! What say you?*Bernard (revolted).*— What do I say? Listen! When you wrote me from England you had been saved I preferred not to answer. You asked for no news and out of a kind of pity I recoiled from giving you the news I had. I opened an account for Mr. Rénaud, you acknowledged receipt of the same, we stopped there. But in the face of your impudence, I felt like showing you the havoc you have wrought. Two months after the history of your rebellion was published in Europe, our mother died of a broken heart. Yes, it can be proven, solely of that, for till that disaster her health could not have been better. As to our father, it is still more sad. You were his favorite. As long as it was a question of your promotion, of your campaigns, of your fame, his eyes would shine. One day he came into my room while I was writing and spread a paper out before me. With his

nger he pointed to some headlines — “Central Africa. Revolt of a French officer” — Then I began the horrible article in which each line described a crime. The expedition commanded by Michel Prinson accused of atrocities; villages burned, women, children murdered, prisoners crammed with dynamite cartridges which were then exploded. A second expedition sent in search of the first column of evil fame. The history of the ambush prepared by you. The massacre of all the whites! The heroic end of the colonel who fell beneath the shells while crying out the promise of pardon. When I reached the end my father made a sign for me to be still. He walked out without having opened his lips. Never again did he pronounce your name. He dragged on for months with some strange ailment. One morning he was found dead in bed. We succeeded in suppressing the fact that he had taken poison! (*A long silence.*)

Michel.— The poor old people! Very sad! Pah! When a cankerous fruit drops from the tree does the remaining fruit complain? They ripen all the better. Why are human beings less clever? And, moreover, am I to be responsible for all the inaccuracies they have published about me? For instance, the orgies of cannibalism — pure invention! The truth was I sometimes grubbed with my blacks as it was customary for a chief to do — you cannot imagine all the queer things that simmered in that stew — crocodile, snake, parrot. Sometimes I’d pull out bits of monkey — from afar one might have mistaken the shape. There again! That story about a missionary and three nuns who carried on a small mission school at the frontier of the desert whom I am supposed to have seized and dragged about for hundreds of miles, in order to abandon them finally in the bush after the grossest ill treatment — nothing more untrue. To begin with I left the missionary perfectly undisturbed at his post. What could I have done with him? As to the nuns, they were set free the very next day and entrusted to a caravan that was to pass right in front of their school. All my deeds have been enlarged, distorted to suit the fancy. I admit one: to have laid the snare in which those people perished — that, yes — that was a blasted trick! And I might say much more besides — (*interrupting himself*). Come now, come now! upon my word, I am excusing myself. A little more and I’d be begging for pardon! And you who are giving yourself the airs of a judge! No, that’s too good a joke! I cleaned up those people because they were coming to take my power from me, and over there power is worth clinging to. To command in a wild country! Ah! My children! That’s what can be called holding trumps! To be a nigger king and hold a feast to the beat of the tom-tom! To smoke one’s pipe in one’s harem like a horse gyp in his stable, a stable swarming with women who are fine, bold,

and tractable animals that one selects, feels, takes, or leaves. And the hunt! The killing of zebra or antelope, lion hunts, elephant hunts, gorilla or negro hunts, in the vastness of a forest of which you feel you are sovereign. Fancy any one coming to disturb me in there when my guns are ready to go off! Oh! The poor creatures!

Bernard.— You killed your parents and this is how you receive the news of their death!

Michel.— I weep for neither father nor mother, for I was dead before them. You do not weep before a grave if you yourself are in that grave. Certainly I've always been a miscreant, but not to the extent of having only a pebble in the place of a heart. Even at the time when I was murdering women and children I still had hours of emotion. I can tell you the exact moment everything that was sensitive in me became suppressed. You see you may say that the flag is nothing but a rag — rag as much as you please, but from the instant I drew upon it I realized there were no longer for me either parents or friends anywhere upon the earth: one way of being dead.

Bernard.— In spite of myself I pity you.

Michel.— Keep your pity! I have no use for it! The dead have a kind of happiness that takes the place of everything. They have absolute independence. I am free! Not free like a citizen of a country with legislation more or less severe. My liberty is that of the pariah who no longer respects nor considers anything! Do you know under what curious circumstances that first intoxication of liberty was revealed to me?

Bernard.— You have just said — it was when you first gave the order to fire on your flag.

Michel.— Not at all! Then I had only the sense of a complete break with society. The idea that joy could come out of that rupture came much later and in this way: You know that after my rebellion I continued to lead for several weeks the life of a pasha; up to the day when my subjects, feeling I was no longer upheld by France, were, in their turn, angered and murdered me. But they only half succeeded! Brutes that hack you up and see your body covered with a mass of blood in which the whole human form is effaced, and then think the man annihilated! My body was left exposed for hours under the broiling sun to the mercy of swarms of flies. When night came, I dragged myself far from the huts. For months I lived in the bush, wandering by night, sleeping by day. At last, after having walked northward long, long time, I fell upon a nomad band of Tovaïregs, and was carried off captive. For days they dragged me over the sands attached by the neck to the tail of a camel. Well, it was at that moment that I was for the first time drunk with freedom! Yes, with a rope around my neck and the bare end

a camel for an horizon. The truth is liberty is not without, but within us, and in attempting to follow the great strides of the camel, I felt breathing within me a new happiness born of solitude.

Bernard (sarcastically).— A relative solitude.

Michel.— You are a great deal more lonely between an Arab who is lashing you with a whip and a camel jerking you suddenly along, than you are in the vastness of a desert! Since that journey I have never ceased to be at the mercy of rather cruel occurrences. In London I slept under bridges, my stomach empty, on the coldest nights. I was gay! I am still. Mr. Rénaud has no mistress. After loving those who have been raped, he now loves those who can be bought. Mr. Rénaud has no friends. Mr. Rénaud hasn't even relations. Very few people could bear to lead the life led by Mr. Rénaud. Some would die of melancholia. Others would go and bury themselves in a monastery where at least one can say "brother" to a friar. I, not only do I bear the blow, but I bear it with gladness. To be overwhelmed and rise afresh with indomitable will produces happiness.

Bernard (sarcastically).— A happiness that consists of being proud not to have been overcome by trouble.

Michel.— I agree! I am not what might be called happy. Imperturbable is more the term.

Bernard.— You— imperturbable! Why, passion bursts forth at every word!

Michel.— Where do you find passion? I reach here a bit nervous on account of a meeting —

Bernard.— Who upset you, you the imperturbable man! Whom did you meet?

Michel.— Probably the only thing in the world that could still move me! The village is full of troops, and at a street corner I suddenly faced it — that bit of tricolored rag! I took another turn. Oh! Well, drat it! It isn't to bore you with trash that I made this journey.

Bernard.— You are neither son, brother, kindred, nor friend, yet you are still a soldier!

Michel.— No, thanks! I cannot think without disgust of military slavery. You don't understand my trouble.

Bernard.— Very well. Let us speak of something else. You came to say something to me; say it.

Michel.— No, not now. It isn't time, or rather you made a mistake not to have asked me as soon as I put foot in your house. I have no longer any family and you recited a sermon to the prodigal son! No longer a

THE BEAT OF THE WING

country and you made me speak like a conscript. My mind is elsewhere. Good by. I'll return. (CHARLES enters.)

Charles.—An orderly is here on a bicycle. He says the colonel will be here shortly.

Bernard (to CHARLES).—Tell madame she may come down. (Exit CHARLES.) It is the colonel who is to put up here. If you wish to return this afternoon I will be at your disposal whenever you wish.

Michel.—Very well. Are you free at three o'clock?

Bernard.—Yes. I hear Clotilde.

Michel.—Would it annoy you to have me speak to my sister-in-law? Of course if she does not know who I am.

Bernard (after a short hesitation).—She believes you dead. Remain if you like. (CLOTILDE enters, having changed her gown.)

SCENE X

BERNARD, MICHEL, CLOTILDE

Bernard (to his wife, after a vague motion of introduction).—Mr Rénaud. (CLOTILDE bows awkwardly, very much embarrassed.)

Michel (in a most amiable tone).—I have been living abroad for so many years that the sight of the manoeuvres which are of so much interest to everyone is particularly so to me. The sight of French uniforms gives me a feeling of something new.

Clotilde.—You will be able to look at a uniform at close range; we are expecting Colonel Hérouard at any moment.

Michel.—Hérouard! By Jove! He isn't an ordinary creature!

Clotilde.—You know him?

Michel.—Personally, no. Where should I have had the opportunity to meet him? By reputation who does not know him? His campaign in the Soudan was marvelous. He is a brave man! (The sound of a distant band is heard intermittently.)

Bernard.—Listen! A marching regiment, with a band leading. All the troops have not yet been assigned. (The stamping of horse's hoofs is heard outside, followed by a sound of voices.) Eh! What have we here (BERNARD and CLOTILDE both go to the glass door.)

Clotilde (reaching it first).—It's the colonel!

Bernard (quickly, behind her).—Is there some one there to hold his horse?

Clotilde.—Yes, his orderly is there! Ring quickly that he may be shown to the stable! (BERNARD runs to an electric button on the left, near

(The front of the stage.) The colonel does not know where to go; show yourself! (BERNARD after ringing, rushes out on the doorstep. During the first part of the following scene a military band which has only been heard intermittently now grows louder and finally the tune can be distinguished.)

SCENE XI

BERNARD, MICHEL, CLOTILDE, HÉROUARD, then CHARLES, then JEANNE, then HÉLÈNE

Bernard (outside on the doorstep calling).— This way, Colonel!

Clotilde (behind the door, hastily and without turning round, to MICHEL, who stands with his arms crossed near the glass panels, not far behind her).— Should a woman say 'Colonel,' or 'My Colonel,' according to French custom?

Michel (roughly).— I don't know. (*A shadow passes over CLOTILDE's face, but she smiles again immediately and moves to the doorstep, while BERNARD, from without, is making himself polite to the COLONEL.*)

Clotilde (in a hospitable and sympathetic tone).— Colonel, do come in! It is so hot outside! (*The COLONEL appears, in full uniform. He salutes in military fashion, heels together, then shakes CLOTILDE's hand, which is outstretched. BERNARD enters behind him. At the same time CHARLES appearing from within stops near BERNARD, awaiting orders.*)

Bernard (to CHARLES).— What is it?

Charles.— Did not monsieur ring?

Bernard.— You're right. I had forgotten. Show the colonel's orderly the way to the stable. (*Pointing to the front door.*) That way — quick! (*Raising his voice.*) And tell them to take great care of the horse. (*The servant goes out by the garden.*)

Clotilde.— Such a beautiful creature! I was looking at it a while ago. So high strung — so — the eyes of a gazelle! You must know, Colonel, I am mad about everything military. I passed a portion of the night at this window with my daughter. We could not drag ourselves away from the sight of battle. On what side was your regiment?

Hérouard.— There; you can see very well from here the spot we defended nearly all the time. (*He takes a step toward the gallery and comes face to face with MICHEL. He stops, sees the scarred face of MICHEL and bows.*)

Clotilde (obliged to introduce MICHEL and with visible reluctance).— Mr. Rénaud. (*Michel returns a swift bow to the COLONEL: the COLONEL makes a motion to offer his hand when CLOTILDE passes quickly between the two men and drags the COLONEL to the window.*) Where did you say it was, Colonel?

Hérouard.— From three to five in the morning my sharpshooters were stationed along the hedge of those grounds, half way up the coast above Jossigny. You see, to the left of the big white house! (*The military band which for the last few minutes has not been heard, suddenly bursts out in an inspiring march.*)

Bernard.— How does a regiment happen to be here?

Hérouard (laughing).— Rest assured, Sir Deputy, you have but the colonel to house. But when one receives the colonel one also puts up the flag. It is a company of the 170th which, headed by the band, is escorting the flag to your house. To-morrow, with the same formality, they will return for it. (*JEANNE, entering by way of the gallery, runs hurriedly to the middle of the room.*)

Jeanne (out of breath).— They are bringing the flag. The colonel orderly says that — (*She perceives she is standing before the COLONEL and stops, embarrassed.*)

Hérouard (smiling, bows before her).— Your mother told me that you take the utmost interest in military operations. I see she did not exaggerate. As an officer, permit me to congratulate you. (*He extends his hand, at which she places her own, and leaving the COLONEL she finds herself beside her father.*)

Jeanne (to BERNARD, in an undertone).— I might do well to call Monsieur Froment. She was sorry to have missed the battle in the night.

Bernard.— Yes, do so. (*Jeanne rushes out quickly. The band has been steadily approaching. It stations itself before the door, where it stops playing suddenly. JEANNE returns, red and out of breath, followed by HÉLÈNE.*)

Jeanne (laughing and pointing to HÉLÈNE).— I met her on the stairs. She could understand nothing of all this noise, and was seeking a spot from which she could see the assault upon the house. (*Moving to the front door.*) Can one look?

Hérouard.— Why not? I am proud to present my men to you. Just look at them after an eight-hour march! (*Saying thus the COLONEL motions to JEANNE, and then to HÉLÈNE to come out on the doorstep. CLOTILDE starts to follow. As soon as she has glanced outside she returns hastily to her husband.*)

Clotilde.— There is a crowd! The whole population is there. Show yourself. It will have an admirable effect.

Bernard.— At once — (*looking around him*).— A hat! (*Hastily running about the room.*) — I must have a hat, quick!

CLOTILDE (hunting with him).— I do not see any. Why not go hatless? It isn't the kind of weather to give you a cold.

Bernard (exasperated).—To the devil with colds. It is to salute the flag! (*Detaching his syllables.*) To sa-lute the flag.

Michel (going to him).—Here is mine. (*He hands him his hat.*)

Bernard (seizing it feverishly).—Never mind! Thank you! (*He puts it on and rushes out.* During the preceding remarks various military orders were being given, the last distinctly: *Right shoulder. Shift arms! Then a pause, while the captain salutes with his sword the flag that faces the band. Then in a loud clear voice the command is given: 'To the flag!' Clarions and drums beat and ring. The band plays. At the very instant the march bursts forth, BERNARD appears on the doorstep. He pushes aside those present and well in sight of the crowd he is seen removing his hat with a large and solemn sweep, and holds it aloof all the time the band plays. It ceases. The honors have been done. The flag bearer, escorted by two under-officers, starts up the steps. As he passes beside BERNARD, the latter, in a loud voice, cries: 'It is the pride of France that is crossing my threshold!' Bravos by the crowd. Numerous shouts of 'Hurrah for the army! Hurrah for France!' MICHEL, during the saluting of the flag, has remained alone, half seated upon a table in the middle of the apartment, his back to the front door, arms crossed, looking around vaguely. On the arrival of the flag bearer, he gives a start, turns suddenly and finds himself in the presence of the flag. The officer bearing it, uncertain as to which way to proceed, and finding himself still far from those who have been delayed without by the crowd, addresses MICHEL.*

SCENE XII

The same. THE FLAG BEARER

The Flag Bearer (to MICHEL).—Excuse me, sir—the colonel's room—which way do I go?

Michel (roughly).—I don't belong to the house.

Bernard (quickly).—This way—they will show you (*calling*). Jeanne! Jeanne! Show monsieur the colonel's room.

Jeanne.—If you will come, sir—(*She moves away, followed by the FLAG BEARER.*)

Hérouard (laughing, to JEANNE, who disappears).—It is for the sake of the country, mademoiselle!

(MICHEL, while attention is concentrated on the flag, rushes to the garden like a madman. His departure is remarked by none of the assistants except HÉLÈNE, against whom he pushes in his haste. During this time the COLONEL discourses.) The flag, in a room, is a glorious companion, but rather in the way, for we have orders to rest the pole horizontally across the back of two

chairs in such a way that the material falls vertically without making any creases. All this takes up a lot of room.

Bernard.— Why not place it in a corner, quite simply?

Hérouard.— Out of economy. That it may last as long as possible. The principal object is to prevent creases. (*The FLAG BEARER returns, crosses the hall without speaking, joins the two subofficers remaining by the door and leaves with them. Immediately afterward military commands are given. The band departs, the regular march of their retreating steps being heard.*)

Clotilde (to *BERNARD*, in an undertone).— I no longer see Mr. Rénaud.

Bernard.— What! (*Looking about him.*) Gone! Pah! (*Pointing to the hat which is still in his hand.*) His hat! (*Giving it to JEANNE.*) There! Run quickly to the servant's hall and have a man on a bicycle despatched with it.

Clotilde.— But if he went by the cliffs?

Bernard.— Not at all. He will be found behind the soldiers.

Hérouard.— You are speaking of Mr. Rénaud?

Bernard.— Yes — we were surprised — he has departed!

Hérouard (suddenly).— What is he?

Bernard.— Why — an old friend. He comes rarely.

Hérouard.—Excuse my indiscretion. I did not ask because — an old officer, isn't he?

Bernard (deeply annoyed).— He! What an idea! He is the most pacific of men!

Hérouard.— Who has received bullets full in the face! If he isn't an old officer he is certainly in bad luck!

ACT II

SCENE I

MICHEL, HÉLÈNE.

HÉLÈNE seated in the gallery. She holds a book which she does not read and looks out dreamily to sea. *MICHEL* arrives at the left. He approaches *HÉLÈNE* noiselessly. Suddenly she realizes that a man is behind her and watching her, then she rises with a little cry of fright and recognizes *MICHEL*.

Michel.— As frightened as that?

Hélène (half laughing, half gasping).— I was not expecting —

Michel (calmly).— Even when expecting it, the effect of my mug is not spoiled. (*HÉLÈNE endeavors to move away.*) Well! Where are you going?

Hélène.— To let Mr. Prinson know that you are here.

Michel.— You will do nothing of the kind. I just came into the garden on the side that has no gate, and while I was vaulting the fence he was looking at me from an upper window.

Hélène.— Then you did not come by the high road?

Michel.— No, across country; I have time to lose. (*A silence.*) What did they say this morning when they noticed that I had gone off without my hat?

Hélène.— Without your hat?

Michel.— Ha! Ha! You didn't take in the trick about the hat? That's good; that's a sign that no one noticed my sudden disappearance.

Hélène.— Yes — but they did a little — the colonel asked if you weren't an old officer.

Michel (*mutters between his teeth*).— Ah! He has an eye, the wretch. (*A silence.*) What did they answer?

Hélène.— 'No.' Of course.

Michel.— 'Of course,' amuses me! Why, of course?

Hélène.— I spoke without thinking, I assure you!

Michel (*sarcastically*).— I doubt it! Well, what is your real opinion — an officer or not?

Hélène.— I went into the convent eight years ago, when my mother died; I came out of it last evening for the first time. What can I know?

Michel.— Eight years in a box without vacations, nor getting off?

Hélène.— Not a day!

Michel.— That's pretty smart! Why was it precisely yesterday that you were let out? (*HÉLÈNE gazes at him in surprise and does not reply.*) Very well — I am meddling in things that do not concern me, eh? (*Becoming animated.*) Eh! Go to! Say it to my face! I rather like things sent me full in the face.

Hélène.— How can I interest you?

Michel.— You do not interest me. (*Striking his chest.*) But one creature in the world can boast of interesting me. And the bit of news I ask might be of use to him. Do you give a hang — ?

Hélène.— I should be glad to be of service to you.

Michel.— Ah! Little lady, that is a pretty speech for which you will be at once rewarded. I am going to make you a present — a real present, since you are blessed with teeth and nails. Did you know that Bernard Trinson had a brother?

Hélène.— Yes.

Michel.— It was your mother who told you, eh? When you were a child!

Hélène.— She! No, never did she mention the name of any Prince before me, neither deputy nor otherwise. It was the mother superior at the convent at which I was educated. Once she asked me if the deputy who paid my expenses was related to an officer who after having rebelled was massacred by his accomplices. By my expression she realized I knew nothing about it, so she related all the facts.

Michel.— All! In a few words, I dare say! All! Oh! I wish I had them in the bush, those wretches who terrorize little girls with their bogeyman stories! Yes, in the bush to teach them! Well, then, you know in general what he did, this brother of Bernard Prinson! See here, I am the brother! I am Michel Prinson! (*He stops, waiting for some sign of approach or terror.* HÉLÈNE, quite calm, remains with eyes fixed upon him.) A murderer! Worse than a murderer! Should I mention my name, at the end of the world, no matter where, they will move away from me as from the plague. You cannot fathom how low I have fallen.

Hélène (slowly).— On the contrary, I understand better than any one.

Michel.— And you listen to me — as good as gold! Don't I horrify you?

Hélène.— Not at all! Rebellion is of all crimes the one I most excuse.

Michel (laughing).— I laugh because you speak of crimes with the assurance of an old magistrate. See here! Your weakness for rebellion is appalling! At your convent did you feel like cutting the sisters' throats?

Hélène.— Oh! Come now!

Michel.— Then, whom do you hate?

Hélène.— I don't know. Everybody.

Michel.— You mean the organization of things; society. The world makes you open your eyes! I'll bet that your teachers didn't use it often.

Hélène.— Never! Yes, I do bear much ill will to society. It made me grow up in prison.

Michel.— Well! Thanks to me you have the chance not to return. I pass over my secret to you with full liberty to shout it out on the house top. I live the life of a foreigner — I call myself Rénaud — I associate with human beings only at an eating house or a tavern — even then not often. If a little girl starts to tell in France that Michel Prinson isn't dead, how can that trouble my digestion? My brother, however, is not such a philosopher. He is a politician, therefore a trembler! He quakes at the very notion of my resurrection. If ever you wish to render those who forgot you in a convent for eight years, more attentive, I furnish you with the means. Nice, am I not? Will you still hesitate to explain to me why it was yesterday, particularly yesterday, and not two months ago or a week hence, that you were delivered from your long captivity?

Hélène.— I myself have wondered; I can find no motive. But one thing did strike me and that is that Mr. Prinson advised both his daughter and myself to be very nice and confiding with you. He seemed to address himself especially to me.

Michel (to himself).— Exactly! Exactly!

Hélène.— You see, I obey; I am confiding.

Michel.— And nice, very nice! (*A silence.*) Did you care for the invent?

Hélène.— No.

Michel.— Such a stupid question. You said ‘prison.’ Aside from that, your teachers must have been good enough sort of people?

Hélène.— Yes.

Michel.— You could find comrades to play with, laugh with, when need—
I argue with —

Hélène.— Not always. My comrades had families. I, as I told you, had lost my mother. As to my father, do not let us speak of him, it is better so! During vacation time I was left alone.

Michel.— Then is was ennui — gloomy ennui!

Hélène.— Oh! very gloomy. Especially when I was little. To wander alone for six weeks in that huge, deserted school seemed frightful to me! The very time which brought so much joy to the other children made me weep with sadness. When I got older I learned to conquer my state of mind rather better, but I was no happier thereby.

Michel.— What worried you later?

Hélène.— I suffered at being educated by charity.

Michel (sarcastically).— For the charity done unto you!

Hélène.— It was probably because I could not feel touched by it that became unbearable! I succeeded in getting rid of it!

Michel.— How?

Hélène.— When before taking me away Mr. Prinson wished to settle for my expenses I said coldly to him: ‘No, you owe nothing. I have reached an age no longer to live on charity. For two years I looked after the younger ones in exchange for my indebtedness. It was true, and I had prepared an enormous joy for myself when the day came to make my little speech —

Michel.— Did it create a sensation?

Hélène.— Not in the least. Your brother smiled and spoke of something else.

Michel.— The beast! It isn’t to be complimentary, but I can’t help noticing that our returns are much alike. In order to owe no man anything

you washed brats' faces, and I swept street crossings; two similar occupations. Soon you will learn to your sorrow that when you earn your bread there is something else lacking. One is obliged to fight for happiness inch by inch. When I returned from Africa I first considered carefully how near to die of hunger, and after that, drat it! I had to stave off boredom exactly like a child at large in a great deserted school.

Hélène.— I know a little girl who more than once leaned out of the dormitory window with the temptation of breaking herself to pieces on the pavement below. But they painted such a gruesome picture to her of the fires of hell that, although without much belief in it, still she did not dare risk an eternity of suffering. Since our natures are alike, you must have felt the same?

Michel (laughing).— More or less!

Hélène.— Then hell gave you also food for thought?

Michel.— Oh! As for me, the devil doesn't frighten me! No! Every time I was on the point of blowing out my brains what held me back was a kind of hope — Do not ask me what I expected. In my mouth the idea would seem simply absurd. Yet, it decided me to go on living. And so no matter how, on I'd go. If I were to tell you that on a Christmas night when I was feeling particularly forsaken in the midst of so many joyous people, I ordered for my dinner an omelet with rum, not because I cared especially for the dish, but because that little flame dancing before my eyes seemed to live. It was company,— comforting. One is idiotic sometimes.

Hélène.— I don't call that being idiotic.

Michel.— True; it isn't if it can get you out of your trouble! Look here! Since you understand the charm of that small flame, I am going to teach you another way of getting companionship. You invent characters and write at their dictation. It is my greatest resource! Those people speak, act, love, quarrel, make up, all beneath my eyes. I burn with the intense passion. For weeks I weep, I laugh, I suffer, I hope with them. Life is more complicated, more ridiculous than the omelet: but like the omelet it is company.

Hélène.— If you write for weeks, in the end you must have a real play.

Michel.— No! I would not have the art or the patience to finish such work. Michel Prinson, playing the guitar by moonlight and showing his marionettes! It is only a pastime, nothing more. I open the door to phantoms and to compel myself to listen to them I take down their words. Perhaps if I disciplined my manikins, if I attempted to shut them up in a drama, I would frighten off the last friends that still deign to visit me. (pause.) How did the idea of a play occur to you?

Hélène (laughing).— At the convent I was an actress! For instance, at the feast of Saint Sophia, patron saint of the school, they played ‘The Son of the Prince.’ I took the part of a sorceress, a horrible part, which they did not wish to give to the daughter of rich parents.

Michel.— ‘The Son of the Prince.’ What black irony it must be! In spite of that, was there applause?

Hélène.— A great deal.

Michel (with shining eyes).— What! When you finished your tirades and a thunder of applause greeted you throughout the hall — didn’t you feel a bit of a thrill there? (*He puts his hand on his heart.*)

Hélène.— No thunder of applause greeted me. Characters that are hated receive none.

Michel.— Too bad! You lost the chance of making the acquaintance of the one thing that is worth the trouble of dying for.

Hélène.— What’s that? You speak as if you knew it well.

Michel.— Better than merely knowing it! I touched it, really touched it. It was on my return from my first African campaign. In the papers and reviews they were not afraid to print that I had a genius for war. Without money, almost disowned by my superiors, with half-savage followers, I had discovered a new world. I arrived with a reputation ahead of me for the wildest bravery! To welcome me, the Geographical Society, in conjunction with the government organized a great reception in the big hall of the Trocadéro. The president of the Republic was there, and around him ministers, generals, scientists, artists — everybody who was anybody in the country. When I entered a religious silence fell. They wanted to see! And suddenly they saw. Upon the platform a pale young man, with the scar on his forehead you can still see there now (*he points to a white line across his brow.*) Only it was fresh — it shone like a red cockade. Then out of that human furnace full of a seething fever engendered by me, a great war burst forth. My name! On those millions of lips nothing but my name! At that moment I was far from earth. An eagle of the mountain tops, the eagle bearer of the thunderbolt had swooped down upon me and had carried me with one great beat of its wing, so high that beneath my eyes the crowd sank into an abyss, out of which forever one name mounted — mine! (*Hélène bursts into tears.*) Well! What! You are weeping?

Hélène.— You have been all that — you!

Michel.— Yes, as you see me. And the soul I had on that day, in spite of my fall, I can find again within me.

Hélène (sobbing).— I can feel it, indeed! That is what makes me weep!

Michel.— Really?

Hélène.— It makes me understand how much you are to be pitied.

Michel.— I'll be hanged if I thought that there was a creature living who would be touched by any of my ills.

Hélène.— Oh yes, believe it!

Michel.— I can then before I die share in the emotion of some one else. Perhaps for one minute be in sympathy with another human being! And that because a long time ago I touched that incomparable thing we were speaking about!

Hélène.— At least tell me the name of that thing?

Michel.— Why, glory, little stupid!

Hélène.— Glory! I supposed it only existed in fabulous epochs. the time of Cæsar and Alexander. As to fancying that I should meet with it in life! It's the first time I ever thought of it!

Michel.— At your age I had already started in pursuit of it. She was whom I saw shining at the end of all my tramps in the wilds; and the day when a fool came to plant himself between me and her, I crushed him! Yes, it was from longing to be too great that I fell so low. But there is nothing to prove that I shall not rebound all the higher. Here, my child, you asked why I didn't blow my brains out. Solely because I undertook to transform my disgrace into glory. (*Pointing to the beach hidden from spectators.*) See those people at our feet. So small that they look no larger than rats. They are snail pickers, seekers after wreckage, eaters of rotten fish! Well! In appearance they are much nearer to glory than I am. In spite of that I shall have it. (*Perceiving his brother, who has just entered the gallery and is watching him, as well as his companion, with lively curiosity.*) Here is my illustrious brother.

SCENE II

HÉLÈNE, MICHEL, BERNARD

Bernard.— May one hear of what you are talking so intently?

Michel.— I am giving this young girl a performance. We were looking up recipes for driving away boredom. I was boasting of the charm of day dreams, and I awoke to find myself dreaming aloud.

Hélène.— Such a beautiful dream!

Bernard.— Well, then, I don't happen to have come at the wrong time since I am able to suggest a means of diversion. Hélène, my wife wishes you to be told that she and my daughter are going to tea at Mme. Rentier. The young officers of the 170th will be there. There will be dancing. It will be very gay. These ladies are about to go, if you care to join them, you had better start at once.

Hélène (glancing at her skirt).— With my boarding school gown I look
e I know not what!

Bernard.— Oh, but they will give you a chance to change, by Jove!

Hélène.— I have nothing else to put on —

Bernard.— If that's all, my daughter will lend you whatever you want
make yourself beautiful.

Hélène.— Frankly, I'd rather go toggged out as I am — but I am not in
e mood and I shall remain —

Michel.— Are you shy?

Hélène.— Give me a little time to accustom myself and I will become
ry bold. To-day I still feel strange. I would arrive there like an owl
ragged out of its hole into the sunshine — it struts about first on one foot
d then on the other, rolling great eyes around.

Bernard (laughing).— Such a picture resembles you tremendously!

Michel.— You did not observe owls in the convent.

Hélène.— No, my observation of owls dates from my early childhood.
y mother had retired into the country where she was making a tolerably
ood living — she was the village dressmaker. In the attic of the house in
rich we boarded were always a number of owls. When I was good, to
ward me, I was taken to look at them; when I was naughty, to punish me,
was locked in with them.

Bernard.— In point of ingenuity it almost equalled the invention of
aven or hell. But excuse me! I shock you. A young girl educated by
ins!

Hélène.— Oh! I am not very devout!

Michel (laughing to HÉLÈNE).—Don't climb up your tree! Not having
it had the opportunity to observe you he invents anything to loosen your
ngue!

Bernard.— Too much wit, Mr. Rénaud!

Hélène (laughing heartily and ready to clap her hands like a joyful child).
Monsieur Rénaud! You throw out that name with conviction!

Bernard.— I do not throw it out — I call Rénaud 'Rénaud.' Why
e you laughing? (*Looking at MICHEL.*) What does she know?

Hélène.— Everything (*pointing to MICHEL*). He makes no secret of it,
d I am exploding!

Michel.— Oh! the little scamp! Not a cent's worth of patience — a
pe I know!

Bernard (to MICHEL).— You — we are going to settle that business at
ce!

Hélène.— Shall I go?

Bernard.— On the contrary, remain, in case you might be needed (*Motioning to the gallery.*) You will be comfortable over there. What have to say will not take long. (*HÉLÈNE goes over to the gallery and sits down. Scarcely has she moved away before the conversation begins again between the two men.*) So you let her know who you are?

Michel.— Why, yes! I did.

Bernard.— With the intention of taking charge of her?

Michel.— You are joking! I told her you are my brother, without adding that she is my daughter.

Bernard.— The very thing that could annoy me and not cause you the least inconvenience. Decidedly, you mean war?

Michel.— Oh! Not at all. You will have proof of it when I tell you the motive for my journey.

Bernard.— Why tell her your real name?

Michel.— Why put me in her presence?

Bernard.— I should have driven her from my house, I suppose, to make room for you?

Michel.— It would have been enough not to have removed her from the convent where she was, even yesterday! Who obliged you to bring her suddenly to your house? In other years you did not give her even an hour's vacation, and here you are giving her one before the prizes are distributed. You are in such haste to get her on the train that you don't even take time to buy her a gown.

Bernard.— Give gowns yourself then, to your daughter!

Michel.— You are so remarkably charitable that one remains lost in admiration with one's hands in one's pockets watching you empty your pockets. Answer my question. What spurred you so? (*A pause.*) Eh! Tell me, you schemer! My return! There is certainly some link between my presence and Hélène's arrival.

Bernard.— And what of that?

Michel.— What of that? I might ask some explanation, but pshaw! If you thought of fooling me, it is more yourself you have fooled. You are a schemer, you, a man who leaves nothing to chance! I am impulsive, capable of putting my skin at the mercy of a stranger whose face pleases me. I talked, whose fault is it? The girl seemed rather nice and I enjoyed pumping her! Come now, none of this is very serious; only your manner of throwing my daughter at my head didn't suit me, and when I am attacked I have rather brutal reactions.

Bernard.— There is the real truth out! One might have fancied the charm of that young girl had wrung your secret from you. Sweet illusion!

trifle irritates you and without even verifying whether I have the smallest cause of complaint against you, you immediately give me great cause for worry — It is your way! You treat me as you once treated France!

Michel.— Yes, old man, I do you that honor! You; France, a fly buzzing about my nose — so long as it's outside of me — pooh!

Bernard.— It is monstrous.

Michel.— Exactly, I am a monster! You couldn't pay me a finer comment! Monsters alone have strength enough to push egotism as far as flatness. They are giants among the idiots and cowards that form the human flock.

Bernard.— For you every good man, or simply an inoffensive one, is then an idiot or a coward?

Michel.— That's exactly it.

Bernard.— What am I, then?

Michel.— Oh! certainly not an idiot! This morning while you were talking to the flag, I felt like strangling you, because I have particular ideas about that thing; I send bullets at it, but I don't care to have it fooled with! I remember what a local paper said, which I read yesterday while I was eating my dinner at the inn: 'In Bernard's speech the echo of Michel's words was heard.' That is truly inspired! We are, you and I, people who live on the nation. One gingerly, the other ferociously — two monsters!

Bernard.— Only one, if you please. I have, indeed, everything needed to be a monster. The boldness, the intelligence, an all-pervading egotism which precludes all scruples. I cut my way without bothering much about the means and my speeches often flatter the people to the detriment of the public good. Yesterday, at the tribune, I bargained off the defenders of the flag; to-day I salute the flag. It was, it is true, made with the hat of a dictator, and I considered it a delightful irony, up to the time the flag crossed the threshold, for then I blushed at being no more than a clown. You see I am not mincing words. You can then believe me, if I tell you that in spite of my wrongs I remain a useful citizen, applying himself to fruitful reforms, and whose deeds are, on the whole, beneficent. Do you know why? Simply because I never lose sight of those twenty lines that future historians will dedicate to me. I am taking care of my page in the history of France.

Michel.— I see that — you dream of glory!

Bernard.— Yes — the real! — after death! The only one!

Michel.— The only one, you say?

Bernard.— The living get only popularity. You become glorified when you are no longer there to know! Thus I do not believe in the immortality of the soul, and I work for eternity! I despise, as much as you do, the vile

masses and I allow myself to be governed by public opinion. Odd nature for a man who prides himself on being positivish!

Michel.— An instinct like that is not to be explained. Glory is beautiful and you want it, that's all!

Bernard.— It is beautiful! Yes, that is enough to explain my absence of logic. Each time nature requires that an individual should sacrifice wellbeing to the good of the species, she brings forth something beautiful. For instance, the beauty of the human creature, then lovers locked in each other's arms forget paternity, with all its burdens, maternity with all its pains that a child may be given to the race. Well, glory, too, helps with its beauty to protect the species.

Michel.— Against whom?

Bernard.— Against people like you and me. You made me confess that I would be a monster if the desire of leaving a great memorial had made me, if not a brave man, at least a useful one. What I say of myself applies to all beings superlatively endowed. They are too well armed to have the temptation of oppressing the weak. Without the sublime consequence which animates them to use their strength and shed their blood for the benefit of society, in the hope that posterity will remember them instead of great men there would be only executioners.

Michel.— You are right. Before being an executioner, I had bravely served my country, not out of devotion, but for love of glory. Why, never having ceased to love it, did I not maintain myself at the height to which it had carried me?

Bernard.— You are one of the scamps, fortunately rare, whose egotism is indomitable. As long as yours was young you let yourself be dominated by the intoxication of being acclaimed a hero. But very shortly, egotism took the upper hand. You became a looter, an assassin, a murderer of your parents, a cowardly seducer, a father without feeling. You have broken all barriers, including the only one capable of intimidating a demon like you— Yes, you knocked over even glory!

Michel.— You waste your time reviewing my crimes. (*Pointing to HÉLÈNE.*) That child weeping over me has just placed them before me so poignant a way that I would give everything in the world for her not to see my child. As for you, you have won my respect. I do not mention it in order to flatter you. My respect does not flatter,— but to give myself confidence. You do not belong to the illustrious ones who are bloated with stupid self-satisfaction. I felt, through what you said, a great sadness. You perceive your renown floating off in a majestic flight toward a distant future and you are the prisoner of a short life. Bernard, we were made to understand each other. You shall have glory! I have not renounced it —

Bernard (sarcastically).— Repeat that!

Michel.— I wish to conquer glory!

Bernard.— If a black sheep of your species dreams of it, then that is at the time when he must fall into the trap laid by nature for the rebel.

Michel.— Why 'trap?' Ah, yes. To be good, serviceable, useful for the sake of some beautiful dream which you never grasp since it stretches out its arms to you for the other side of the grave. Never mind! Some of the living come so near to it that their faces are glorified with the reflection of its radiance. Can I not be one of those living ones?

Bernard.— Alive or dead you will never enter within the circle of eternal light. You are without a country and it is love of country that makes a man great!

Michel.— What if I tried to be a great man by making a country for myself?

Bernard.— How?

Michel (turning toward HÉLÈNE, raising his voice).— Eh! little one. You have heard half of my dream, listen to the rest! (*HÉLÈNE enters the room and listens attentively to the conversation continued between the two men.*) Be assured that I took this journey on purpose to tell you what you are going to hear. If I speak to a deaf man, existence is ended for me, I have nothing more to do but kill myself! What will you decide?

Bernard (coldly).— First let us see.

Michel.— I returned to Africa. The country I traversed adjoins the French possessions of Chari.

Bernard.— Where did you get money for such a journey?

Michel.— I never touched, for my personal needs, the fortune you gave back to me. Small services modestly repaid allowed me to subsist well enough. All this time my capital was increasing and grew into a considerable amount. This amount I divided into two unequal parts; the smaller covered the trip I described; with the other I make myself strong enough in a few months to become the master of a vast empire, adjoining French territory. My intention is then to take back my own name and offer my conquest to France.

Bernard (sarcastically).— You had not accustomed us to so much abnegation.

Michel.— It isn't abnegation — if I give I expect something in return.

Bernard.— What, for heaven's sake?

Michel.— A triumph without precedent. Fancy the entry into Paris of a man who will put into the hands of France, like a diamond upon his mistress's finger, a country so rich and well populated. Remember the ovation

I received of yore, and yet then I brought only the hope of conquest. When as this time I shall be offering it!

Bernard.—Tush, my man, you're not going to make a fool of yourself. And I, what part am I to play in all this?

Michel.—My expedition is only possible if I can have brought across the Congo enormous armaments and munitions. I don't ask for money but it is of the utmost necessity that I should obtain, upon your credit, the good will of France for the deeds of Mr. Rénaud.

Bernard.—In short, it simply means to begin anew in the name of Rénaud the adventure of Michel Prinson. Well no! I'll have nothing to do with it.

Michel.—You can't be compromised. An individual without any mission. A schemer you deny in case of disaster. Only see that I am let alone. No risk! Everything is prepared. Over twenty negro kings, whose friendship I have made await only my arrival to —

Bernard.—You are losing your time. I to send you over there! That would I be drawing the trigger on my country!

Michel.—Do you prefer to kill me?

Bernard.—Oh! No sentiment! Leave it at that!

Michel.—At least know where you will send me then. I have decided to offer myself to the first Buffalo Bill that comes along who will engage me for his circus. In this I but imitate Cronje, the Boer general whom some Barnum exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition. You can count on a new scandal! Your brother will be seen in the midst of a crowd of negroes seated in the brush, spying on a French convoy passing through the wilds. I shall see everything!

Bernard.—Fake! Fake! Fake! of blood and mud!

Michel (*passing his hand over his face at the spot indented by the scar*) —Look! Actors' make-up is washed off more easily than these.

Bernard.—There are fakes even in the shadow of the guillotine, and too can make deep gashes. What reason have you to commit such an outrage? Cronje had a good one; starvation. But you?

Michel.—You must understand that life devoid of violent sensations is impossible for me! What I want out of the circus are the cat calls of the populace maddened by my presence, the insults and curses, the blows, and peril of death — I would face them! It would be my last battle!

Bernard.—Never, in France, will the government allow you to appear in public — it would be the shame of the nation.

Michel.—In Belgium, in Switzerland, in Italy, never mind where! I should certainly find some country to show me a little mercy. Yes, even

broad, I hope there will be among the audience a French officer who will take out his pistol and brain me.

Bernard.— I hope so too! (*He leaves brusquely.*)

SCENE III

HÉLÈNE, MICHEL

Michel.— You hear him! And he is my brother!

Hélène.— The horrible man! Try to forget him! Listen to me! I don't want you to join a circus. I know how to prevent you.

Michel.— You, my poor child!

Hélène.— Let me see! If you were not alone, would that make you feel like living?

Michel.— To be not alone any more. But — who would keep me company?

Hélène.— I! You tell me phantoms come to visit you and help you to bear your life. Well, it is no phantom now, but a creature of flesh and blood who knocks at your door. Give me hospitality. I will console you better than your marionettes.

Michel.— By what pretext could I take you to live with me, what will you be?

Hélène.— Your daughter! I am what is known as a natural child. The first passerby who so wills it has a right to declare that he is my father. Declare it! I will have the same attachment for you as if I were your real daughter.

Michel.— Such an idea! Who whispered it to you?

Hélène.— No one, I swear —

Michel.— In the convent I suppose they informed you carefully of the fate of natural children?

Hélène.— Alas! Yes, in the convent! Not the sisters. A pupil who came from the country where I had lived with my mother and knew she was not married. To insult me the wretched girl used to enlighten me — heavens! How she made me suffer! At least I learned that if it suits me to choose a father and he accepts, we don't need anybody's consent.

Michel.— But in the end, what is it that makes you so kind to me?

Hélène.— That which makes you kind to me. Never has any one spoken so nicely to me. You, the great ogre. Let me show you a little gratitude.

Michel (with a bitter laugh).— Oh! What a discovery! You, obliged to me! Tell me you pity me! That is the word! Pity — no, little one, don't eat that bread.

Hélène.— Do you take me for a saint who devotes herself out of charity? I admire you and I am proud of saving you. As soon as you entered the house I was struck by the mystery that surrounded you and I did not cease to observe you. All I saw imposed respect. When the officer who carried the flag asked you the way you replied, 'I don't belong to the house!' in a tone signifying — 'I no longer belong to this world.' Then you knocked against me as you ran away. Your eyes were full of tears. I knew nothing about you; yet I guessed at that very instant they were not tears of sorrow.

Michel.— They in no way resemble them! I had vowed to myself that that flag should float some day over my future conquests. When it appeared I felt like a conqueror — I could see myself already returning from Africa and carried in triumph by the Parisians! I wept with pride!

Hélène.— That is a fine thing! To weep with pride when in your place the average man would but complain and groan. Your perseverance in your quest for glory makes you greater than if you possessed glory, and since you must definitely renounce it, I wish to give you enough affection to take its place.

Michel.— Oh! To take its place!

Hélène.— I am explaining to the best of my ability the thought that occurred to me while you were describing that pale man that a great beat the wing carried upward. Listening to you I seemed to be among the crowd that applauded you! 'T was by the breath of their love that you were carried heavenward. When you go in the conquest of glory into the depths of the desert, you seek, without knowing it, the tenderness of humanity. Don't you see that my tenderness is, in a very small way, that which you are pursuing to the furthestmost parts of the earth!

Michel.— Yes, I have a desperate passion for glory! The passion that makes people have who destroy themselves in order to get rid of themselves, who fall in love with a woman because her smile promises forgetfulness. I, from whose face women turn with horror, I adore glory as a smile upon the lips of humanity!

Hélène.— You see indeed how glory and love are but one, and that my affection comes at a critical time, when your hopes of greatness are destroyed!

Michel.— I cannot accept. You do not know what you offer. It is too much.

Hélène.— Is that a reason not to want it?

Michel.— Yes, it is a reason. My brutish heart is still capable of fondness. This is but the second time we meet, and yet it will be hard for me to part from you. Think what it would be after a long intimacy!

Hélène.— Why should we separate ?

Michel.— Because some day you may learn who I am.

Hélène.— What more can I learn about you ? I know all your crimes.

Michel.— All, except the one that would most revolt you. Ah! All the worse! I am going to tell you. You will turn your back on me, if you can't forgive me.

Hélène.— How queer you are to imagine that one more crime could frighten me. You take me for a little white angel who faints at a lively word. Ah, well, no! I will wager that there is many a bandit with a less resolute heart than I. You know how I detest society which has shown me only misery and shame, a society in league with the man who was my father.

Michel.— That very man, eh ? You would see him die like a dog at your feet, and not move a finger to help him ?

Hélène.— My mother almost cursed him on her death bed. I hate him with all my strength! Let us speak of you.

Michel.— On the contrary, let us not do so. My opinion is fixed. I will say nothing.

Hélène.— As you like, so long as you accept! May I call you father ?

Michel.— No, indeed no! I resign all hope.

Hélène.— My offer gives you a sight of salvation, I feel it. Why repulse ? Does my character frighten you ?

Michel.— Yes, my child. I cannot keep from smiling to hear you declare yourself the enemy of society, because of a few bitter feelings you cherish against it. To let you attach yourself to me in the heyday of your youth, at an age to assure yourself of a splendid future, would be a dastardly action. To walk hand in hand with me one must be a reprobate! Had you fallen in the depths of the whirlpool in which I am struggling, I should say: 'Very well! Let us both try to get out!' But into such a whirlpool one does not fall consciously!

Hélène.— What! You accept as friends only those who fire on the flag! How discouraging! After all, I do keep a ray of hope! When do you leave ?

Michel.— This very day.

Hélène.— No, I should like to talk to you once more. One more day, what difference can it make to you ? Come to-morrow morning.

Michel.— Could we not meet somewhere else ? I prefer not to see my mother again.

Hélène.— Bear this slight annoyance for my sake. I should especially like to have our interview here. May I count on you ?

Michel.— Yes, I will come. It will be to say good by to you.

Hélène.— I shall expect you before nine.

Michel.— That will suit admirably. I can then take a train toward noon.

Hélène (starting to leave).— Au revoir! Until to-morrow, I shall be very busy.

Michel.— What doing?

Hélène.— Rolling in the whirlpool! (*They separate.*)

ACT III

SCENE I

BERNARD, CLOTILDE

BERNARD *is busy reading the newspapers.* Enter CLOTILDE.

Clotilde.— No news as yet?

Bernard.— No, nothing — I am waiting! Over a half hour since I sent Charles; he can't be long now getting back.

Clotilde.— And we shall learn that Michel has gone.

Bernard.— I hope so, but I fear not.

Clotilde.— All the worse! If he did not take a train last night, we shall see him to-day. Do you know where he is stopping?

Bernard.— No. I told Charles to go first to the White Horse. It is the only inn around here where they receive newspapers hostile to me, and Michel quoted a passage from *La Vigie* that he had read at dinner. (*The SERVANT enters.*) Ah! Here is Charles.

SCENE II

BERNARD, CLOTILDE, CHARLES

Bernard (to the SERVANT).— You carried out my orders?

Charles.— I have just come from Jossigny. Mr. Rénaud passed the night at the White Horse.

Bernard.— They did not guess you were sent by me?

Charles.— I was careful to follow monsieur's instructions. It was easy. The innkeeper had more to do than interest himself in me: half the regiment is encamped there. I made a porter talk. He carries the guests' valises. He was ordered to take Mr. Rénaud's to the eleven o'clock train.

Barnard.— All right, thank you. Find out if Miss Froment is up yet. As soon as she is ready, ask her to come here to us.

Charles.— Yes, sir. (*He leaves.*)

SCENE III

BERNARD, CLOTILDE

Clotilde.— What do you wish to say to Hélène?

Bernard.— I am curious to know what happened yesterday when I left her alone with Michel. Their interview lasted fully twenty minutes. After my brother's departure I did not have time to look after her. I was obliged to receive the electors till dinner time, and after dinner be interested in the colonel's campaigns. While I was listening to this good man I kept my eye on Hélène. It seemed to me she was very gay.

Clotilde.— Yes, in a delightful humor.

Bernard.— You cannot get it out of my head that my brother is prolonging his stay on her account. I shall make sure of it by getting her to talk. In case of Michel's having swallowed the bait, I might, by good advice, hasten events.

Clotilde.— If I were you I should tell Hélène squarely that Michel is her father.

Bernard.— What a mistake! She told you she hated her unknown father.

Clotilde.— Yes, but she is impressed with Michel. I shall never believe that physical attraction can be annihilated by a mere mental aversion.

Bernard.— If she forgave Michel without being taken away by him, we would be left with a relative on our hands. Relations of such a stamp. No! (*HÉLÈNE enters; she shakes hands with CLOTILDE and BERNARD.*)

SCENE IV

BERNARD, CLOTILDE, HÉLÈNE

Bernard (gaily to HÉLÈNE).— Up already?

Hélène.— For a long time. Not according to my usual habit, I slept badly.

Bernard.— You had been present during the day at a rather painful scene; it made you nervous.

Hélène.— Probably. Why are you so cruel to that unfortunate man?

Bernard.— One is cruel with tigers.

Hélène.— I, a child, I tamed him at a moment's notice.

Bernard.— It is true! When I joined you, you both appeared to be the best of friends. You should be proud to possess so great a power to tame monsters. I haven't such good luck. Was he not too odious with his

threat to get himself cut to pieces in a circus so as to revenge himself on me for my refusal!

Hélène.— He had no idea of revenge. He would go to the circus, see thousands of men, wild with rage, fall upon him. Alone, against the all, calm and disdainful in the face of the howling mob, he would be superior. Cries of enthusiasm would burst out from among his assassins. While he was dying he would have the sensation of being a hero!

Bernard.— Why does he need to end a peculiarly ugly life with beauty?

Hélène.— His life is not ugly. He deserves the wrath that has overwhelmed him, but under the weight of all that wrath he uplifts himself with splendid energy. I am going to say something which he would be capable of thrashing me for, if he heard it; don't you think that with all his air of wishing to dominate a nation, he is really at that nation's feet? While he was promising to conquer a kingdom for France I got the impression that he was begging his country's forgiveness.

Bernard.— Without humbling himself!

Hélène.— If he humbled himself it would be less touching. To express so ardent a desire to hear his name glorified, is it not confessing how much it hurts him to be detested?

Bernard.— Evidently, his desperate ambition is pathetically beautiful. Unfortunately we can do nothing.

Hélène.— Perhaps not you, but I —

Bernard.— You see some way to help him?

Hélène.— Yes, a very simple way.

Bernard.— What?

Hélène.— You heard how once I wanted to join the order of the Little Sisters of the Poor, which means being a servant to the infirm. I gave it up because I did not possess enough Christian charity to love beings more or less repulsive. But your brother — I would not deserve much credit if I attached myself to him — I would make his life so easy that he would forgive his dreams. My idea may be crazy. What do you think?

Bernard.— Miss Hélène, a romantic idea is not always a crazy one. Yours is excellent; I approve of it immensely. To create duties for oneself is the secret of embellishing life! I see but one objection; under what pretext will you go to Michel, who is not an infirm old man?

Hélène.— Wounds of the heart bleed as much as the other kind.

Bernard.— Yes, but from within.

Hélène.— He showed me his, the most difficult part is done.

Bernard (remonstrating).— Still — what would you be to this man, who is neither old nor ill — a nurse? A sister of charity? Nothing fits!

Hélène.— One thing fits — his daughter!

Bernard.— Bravo! That is well thought of!

Clotilde (throwing her arms about HÉLÈNE).— Let me embrace you! How charming of you!

Bernard.— The next step is to pave the way prudently with Michel.

Hélène.— Must one be so particular with a man who has nothing left to kill himself? I offered to be his daughter.

Bernard.— How, offered?

Hélène.— Yes, — scarcely had you left us. Did I not tell you the most difficult part had been done?

Bernard.— What did he answer.

Hélène.— That he would not accept.

Bernard.— So all is over?

Hélène (embarrassed).— No indeed! I still have hope.

Bernard.— He asked for time to think it over?

Hélène (grasping at the idea).— That's it — to think it over. This morning I am to have my answer.

Bernard.— Ah! You expect a visit?

Hélène.— Yes, it is almost time now.

Bernard.— Well, you will see him. I am told he is still in the neighborhood.

Hélène.— I know it; this morning I saw him from my window. He walked around the garden several times.

Bernard.— What was he looking for?

Hélène.— Me, no doubt.

Bernard.— Why did you not join him? It was a chance to settle it.

Hélène.— I had not finished dressing.

Bernard.— Nonsense! Under such circumstances one is not so careful. *(Interrupting himself.)* Eh? Some one walking in the garden. *(Running to the window.)* It is Michel. He seems undecided — now he's stopping. Here! He has seated himself on a bench. *(To HÉLÈNE.)* We will run away discreetly. Call him.

Hélène.— No, no: I don't want to see him now.

Bernard.— Why?

Hélène.— They are coming after the flag. We would not be left alone. I would rather not speak to him until after the ceremony. Keep him here, he will fly. *(She leaves.)*

SCENE V

BERNARD, CLOTILDE

Clotilde.— What a strange girl!

Bernard.— She would have a thousand opportunities to learn Michel's decision before the flag is carried away. There! Do you wish my opinion? She is not telling the truth, or at least she is concealing some important details. (*Looking outside.*) Ah! Michel is rising. He is slowly approaching. (*Clotilde leans close to the window pane.*) Take care! Don't show yourself! He is looking at all the windows.

Clotilde.— He seems tired — how broken he is since yesterday!

Bernard.— If he should enter, receive him.

Clotilde.— How good you are!

Bernard.— After what has occurred I can no longer speak to him. Even for his own sake any discussion must be prevented, so that all his hopes may be concentrated in his daughter's direction.

Clotilde.— If I am to remain with him, send me re-enforcements! Jeanne, the colonel, whoever you can —

Bernard.— I am going to see the colonel now and I will return with him. As long as any stranger is here there is nothing to be afraid of.

Clotilde.— He is making up his mind; here he is! (*She steps back into the room, seats herself near a table, takes a paper and composes herself.*)

Bernard (*as he reaches the door*).— Do your best. (*He goes out.*)

SCENE VI

CLOTILDE, MICHEL

(*MICHEL enters. He takes several steps in CLOTILDE's direction, and speaks only after he is sure she is alone.*)

Michel.— Good morning, Clotilde — do you recognize me? I am your brother-in-law. In the old days you always treated me in a friendly way. Help me — entreat your husband in my behalf — what I ask is not dangerous. I go in quest of a name. Save your old Michel!

Clotilde (*at first moved, regains her composure and answers in icy tones*).— Monsieur Rénaud, my brother-in-law has been dead a long time — do not let us mention him.

Michel (*bursting forth with a laugh that is almost a sob*).— Ha! ha! ha! Very pretty! A really amusing joke. Worth the journey! Adieu, madame. (*He turns about on his heel, dizzy, endeavoring to go out, then straightens himself with a violent effort and returns to CLOTILDE.*) Am I not absent-minded! I was forgetting the most important thing — I would like to have a word with that child, the orphan. Ha! ha! ha! Orphaned of father and mother!

Clotilde.— You shall see her, Monsieur Rénaud.

(*HÉROUARD, BERNARD, JEANNE, enter.*)

SCENE VII

CLOTILDE, MICHEL, HÉROUARD, BERNARD, JEANNE

*Clotilde (to the COLONEL, who advances to shake hands with her, already belted, booted, and buckled).—*Colonel!

*Hérouard.—*Indeed, yes! Madame, soon they will require me.

*Clotilde.—*You were not too uncomfortable I trust in your small quarters? I reproach myself for having put you there. Not a very large room, and this morning, when I awakened, I remembered your explanations about the flag. A comrade taking up much space, you said —

*Hérouard.—*You are too kind to bother about so little. I occupied the room all to myself. The flag bearer, learning the adjoining chamber was empty deposited the flag in there.

*Clotilde.—*To be sure — the blue room, between Miss Froment's and yours. Why did I not think of it?

*Bernard (to CLOTILDE).—*I say, wife of mine, time flies; we ought to give the colonel his breakfast.

*Clotilde (shrugging her shoulders).—*Be sure, my friend, I thought about that long ago.

*Hérouard.—*Dear deputy, I've been spoiled. I breakfasted at my bedside. I am ready now to receive my men.

*Michel.—*I am surprised to find you going to the manœuvres so late.

*Hérouard.—*Excuse me, Monsieur Rénaud, I did not see you. There are no manœuvres to-day. We are moving camp. As the heat is quite bearable, I decided to make a late morning of it — so my boys are taking it easy. (*Drawing out his watch.*) They should be here in two minutes, and nothing as yet announces the fact. That is what is called military promptness. You who come fresh from Jossigny, give me the news. Is the regiment starting?

*Michel.—*I am not fresh from the village. Since dawn I've been walking.

*Hérouard.—*Was it not you I saw from my window, strolling along the cliffs on the other side of the garden?

*Michel.—*Perhaps. I was ahead of time and for quite a while I've been strolling around the neighborhood.

*Hérouard (approaching MICHEL).—*I must let you know that your trousers are torn — there, at the knee —

*Michel (after examining the place).—*It happened as I climbed over the garden rail. They caught.

*Hérouard.—*You did not come through the gate?

Bernard.— Were doors made for him? Yesterday, too, he entered the garden like a robber.

Michel (*waving toward HÉLÈNE as she enters*).— And here is a young girl to whom my unexplained presence caused a terrible fright. She was quietly reading and suddenly she beheld me standing before her.

SCENE VIII

CLOTILDE, MICHEL, HÉROUARD, BERNARD, JEANNE, HÉLÈNE

Hélène (*interrupting MICHEL*).— No, sir, I was not terribly frightened. A nervous start is not fear. (*Laughing rather forcedly.*) If you take me for a wet hen, you make a mistake! I am very resolute and I shall prove it sooner or later.

Hérouard (*laughing*).— You are proving it now.

Jeanne (*to HÉLÈNE*).— Monsieur Rénaud is very proud whenever he puts a young girl to flight. I am not sorry that he has at last met his match.

Michel (*with feverish gaiety, beneath which despair is noticeable*).— *HÉLÈNE*.— You, too, against me! (*To JEANNE.*) And then, you. (*Looking toward CLOTILDE.*) Whom else? Whose turn next?

Hérouard (*to HÉLÈNE*).— Mademoiselle, you have no right to attack any one. Yesterday your behavior was shocking; to prefer to twirl your thumbs instead of dance with my officers! It's enough to disgust any one with being a soldier!

Jeanne (*to HÉROUARD*).— And I, who waltzed all day, I suppose didn't count! Your lieutenants, though, did not seem disgusted!

Hérouard (*laughing*).— Ah! permit me, mademoiselle, you are begging the question. (*While HÉROUARD endeavors to atone for his mistake, BERNARD approaches his wife and talks to her in an undertone.*)

Bernard.— Well?

Clotilde.— What a state of affairs! He nearly threw himself at my feet!

Bernard.— The grand play, then?

Clotilde.— Yes — 'Clotilde! My sister-in-law! Your old Michel! The whole scale!

Bernard.— You did not weaken?

Clotilde.— Michel dead — I held to that, not without trouble, because he was pitiful. (*Showing the little gathering that is gaily conversing.*) Now again I see in his eyes a real anguish. Go over to them and get the colonel off as soon as you can. For Michel's sake, I want to get it over.

Bernard.— If you were to go away, he would feel more at his ease.

Clotilde.— And what of me! (*Aloud.*) Jeanne, will you go as far as the road with me? We will see if the soldiers are climbing the hill.

Jeanne.— Yes, and I'll rush back and tell the colonel. (*She moves away.*)

Hérouard (*following her with his eyes*).— In her I have a charming little aid-de-camp. (*CLOTILDE and JEANNE go into the garden.*)

SCENE IX

MICHEL, HEROUARD, BERNARD, HÉLÈNE

Bernard.— Charming? No. I shall regard her as a bird of ill augur since she will bring you the signal to depart.

Hérouard.— Really? I can trust that my presence has not been too opportune?

Bernard (*protesting*).— O colonel!

Hérouard.— But! The unexpected guest that one takes in out of a sense of duty —

Bernard (*interrupting*).— It is mean of you to accuse us of such sentiments. We shall miss you very much. Believe me, colonel, your stay in this house will mark a date in my life. Until to-day I fancied the old formulas of patriotism held good only in uncultivated minds. That morning, when I went out to salute the flag, I was conceding something to the prejudices of those who elected me, and I was not as imbued with respect as my attitude made me appear. Well! From the moment that the flag was brought forward, I received the impression that the officer, in saluting with his sword, was offering his life and that of his soldiers, and that the flag accepted! Better than that! When the flag passed by me to cross this threshold, I bowed my head, oh! this time, sincerely moved. 'T was a prince coming beneath my roof. Never vassal received with greater submission the visit of his lord. I speak to you as to a friend, to whom one is not afraid of unveiling one's failings.

Hérouard.— Ah! Monsieur Prinson, I envy your eloquence; it would help me to thank you. Our calling is not in great favor these days. It seems quite simple that we should go to Madagascar and have our bones broken, to Tonquin or the Soudan, so long as we allow ourselves to be treated like fools and good for nothings. 'Tis expected! But, pah! idiots like us are needed! Just the same I find it a relief to meet some one before whom one need not blush for being one of those idiots! There is one man of sense alive who admits that a nation has gone to the devil when it ceases to honor military courage! When I was told I would be put up at Deputy Prinson's, by Jove, I must admit, I wasn't particularly tickled. Your speeches, as they are given in the newspapers have so little resemblance to what I am now hearing! When reading the reports from the Chamber of Deputies one often has to ask 'How can France still exist?' And then one sees that in

spite of everything France is still standing; and then, too, one realizes that there must be some restrictive. Well, now! I know there is a man there. You're a better fellow than you appear. You love France! You love her flag! You don't separate one from the other! The flag! To understand all that means you must hear balls whistling past. A priest has his God living, incarnate in the host,—and the flag to us means a real presence. When it flies in battle 'tis our country herself stretching out her arms to her stricken soldier. When you began to speak of the flag as if it were a human being, I thrilled from head to foot; *It is!*

Michel.— I am an old soldier, and I've done more than hear balls whistle past. Look! (*He raises his hand to his face.*) Yes, you are right. The flag is a human being! But that being is not country! I have noticed beneath the enemy's fire, soldiers of a foreign legion, or people who sell their blood; negroes, plunderers. Around that being who is in question their courage increased wildly. They would let themselves be hacked for her. Yet it was not their country!

Hérouard.— Then what was it?

Michel.— Glory!

Hérouard.— How can that touch negroes who have not even a word to express it, or those desperadoes who have lost even their name?

Michel.— You too, colonel, have led those two types of people into battle. Yes or no, is it a fact that the flag exalts their courage?

Hérouard.— Yes, it is true!

Michel.— How do you explain it?

Hérouard.— For them the flag incarnates the regiment. That esprit de corps, which is a small form of patriotism, enflames them. They protect against the enemy, the emblem of the regiment, with a passion analogous to that which certain games develop. When children fight over a ball they are often broken arms and legs.

Michel.— I have known rebels who had a terrible hatred for the regiment, yet who could not see the flag without turning pale. One therefore did not represent the other. Do you know what makes the flag sacred to negroes and outcasts? It is because they have learned that a whole nation attaches extreme importance to the preservation of that bit of cloth. The rage and scorn await those who allow it to be taken — respect and praise to those who save it — Ah! They have no illusions, those wretches. They hope for neither honor nor triumph — but they feel in a confused way that the exaltation of a whole nation for one object, a man or a thing, constitutes the most thrilling vision possible to contemplate. The object becomes impregnated finally with the sentiment it inspires. I have seen, in the depths

of sanctuaries where thousands of pilgrims crowded, wooden virgins, grown really divine from having heard the ardent prayers and supplications of those throngs. They cured the incurable and converted sinners. The flag itself is woven out of heroism, enthusiasm, and exaltation. It flies aloft swelling out with human emotions. The most humiliated brows are radiant before it. *It is beauty! It is glory!*

Hérouard.— Beauty, that's certain. One fights for it as you would fight on the high road for a beautiful woman.

Michel.— And if a rebel should come to the point of firing on it — well! You kill the woman you find in the other man's arms. You kill and you adore!

Hérouard.— Monsieur Rénaud. You can't make it filter through my old noddle that a soldier can love his flag and fire on it. Moreover, that same noddle will ever confuse patriotism and glory. In spite of which you have said things just now that pleased me. Where did you serve?

Michel (fiercely).— It is of no consequence — I am one of those who have lost even their name.

Hérouard.— I do not insist. (*He stretches out his hand.*) A handshake, anyway.

Michel.— Not even that.

Hérouard (in a resigned tone).— Ah! Ah! I am sorry. (*JEANNE enters first, followed shortly by CLOTILDE.*)

SCENE X

MICHEL, HÉROUARD, BERNARD, HÉLÈNE, JEANNE, CLOTILDE

Jeanne.— Here they are.

Hérouard.— Still very far away?

Clotilde (entering).— Very near, unfortunately.

Hérouard.— Permit me to see if my orderly is saddling my horse.

Clotilde (who has remained by the door).— The horse is there. Already the loafers are circling around him. (*Excepting HÉLÈNE and MICHEL, all the characters stand near JEANNE and CLOTILDE, and grouped about them watch events. Outside are numerous voices, interspersed with calls, with unfinished verses of the Marseillaise hymn, and almost immediately, above all other sounds, the even tread of the company and the click of their arms are heard. A command: the company halts and faces front. Other commands. The sounds of conversation are resumed. The musicians test their instruments. A clarinet rolls out several notes. Meanwhile HÉLÈNE and MICHEL remain alone on the front of the stage. As soon as the others have left them HÉLÈNE turns toward MICHEL and speaks to him in a joyful tone.*)

Hélène.— Good morning! Are you still annoyed with me? What an evil look!

Michel.— The look of a beast at bay.

Hélène.— If you knew, you would look differently. Have faith. Don't you see I am pleased?

Michel.— You are right, little young creature; for you life can be lovely.

Hélène.— For both of us, I hope! (*The flag bearer enters, followed by two SUBALTERNS.*)

SCENE XI

MICHEL, HÉROUARD, BERNARD, HÉLÈNE, JEANNE, CLOTILDE, THE FLAG BEARER

Hérouard (*making a sign to the flag bearer, who places himself, head together, military fashion, before him*).— Can you find your way to the room in which the flag is?

The Flag Bearer.— Yes, certainly, colonel.

Hérouard (*with a sign for him to move on*).—Go! (*The FLAG BEARER disappears in the adjoining room. HÉROUARD turning to CLOTILDE and BERNARD prepares to take leave.*) Madame, there is nothing left but for me to thank you for your hospitality, of which I shall always keep a delightful memory.

Bernard.— And don't forget, colonel, that you owe me reparation for suggesting you were here only as a guest to a certain extent forced upon me. You will come soon as a friend. Will you promise?

Clotilde.— Yes, colonel, you must decide upon a date. Come, do so. (*The FLAG BEARER returns in great haste.*)

The Flag Bearer (*much troubled*).— Colonel, the flag has been stolen!

Hérouard.— What! You are crazy!

The Flag Bearer.— Well! It is gone!

Bernard.— How could they get in? Was the window broken open?

The Flag Bearer.— The window is in perfect condition, the shutter tightly fastened. They must have come by the door.

Bernard.— Was it broken down?

The Flag Bearer.— They had only to open it; it was not locked.

Bernard.— This is unpardonable — unheard of!

Hérouard (*intervening to disculpate his man*).— He is not to blame. No ruling compels one to take the same precautions for the flag as for a purse full of banknotes. The only instructions we have are for its preservation.

Bernard.— Yes — to prevent it being spoiled. No one ever dreamed of its being stolen!

Hérouard.— But who under heaven would have conceived it? What could one do with a stolen flag? It is extraordinary!

Clotilde (going to the doorstep).— There are at least two hundred loungers out there, what will they think!

Bernard (wild).— Yes, colonel, how can we explain it?

Hérouard.— Do I have to report to a lot of loafers?

Bernard.— I, the deputy, in whose house the accident occurred, I have to!

Michel (to BERNARD, in a way that he alone can hear).— Ah! What joy it would be for me to leave you with a dirty story on your hands. But I can't help it — I will speak. (*Advancing to HÉLÈNE and stopping two feet away from her he says to the COLONEL, motioning toward her:*) Here is the chief! (*To HÉLÈNE.*) It is in your room, is it not?

Hélène.— Yes.

Michel (to HÉLÈNE).— You have the key? (*HÉLÈNE nods.*) Give it to me! (*She draws the key out of her pocket and gives it to MICHEL who hands it to the LIEUTENANT.*)

Clotilde (to the FLAG BEARER).— Lieutenant, come, I beg of you. (*She goes out with him.*)

SCENE XII

MICHEL, HÉROUARD, BERNARD, JEANNE, HÉLÈNE

Bernard (to HÉLÈNE).— Why this insane act?

Hélène.— I was found out too soon. I meant to go to my room and throw the flag out of the window at the feet of the soldiers.

Bernard.— I am overwhelmed. What did you expect? What did you hope for?

Hélène.— I wished to be arrested, condemned, put in prison. (*Looking at MICHEL.*) Those that have fallen lowest must feel at home with me!

Hérouard.— Well. Mademoiselle, your strange wish shall not be granted. You shall not be arrested, nor even annoyed. (*Turning to BERNARD.*) It would be cruel to take seriously the mad freak of a girl.

Bernard (to the COLONEL).— Be sure I shall make her pay dearly for her joke.

SCENE XIII

MICHEL, HÉROUARD, BERNARD, JEANNE, HÉLÈNE, CLOTILDE, the FLAG BEARER

(*The FLAG BEARER returns holding the flag and followed by CLOTILDE. He goes straight to HÉROUARD.*)

THE BEAT OF THE WING

Hérouard (to the FLAG BEARER).— All is well ?

The Flag Bearer.—Yes, in perfect condition, Colonel. (He moves toward the front door.)

Hérouard (to BERNARD).— Then, good by, dear deputy.

Bernard.— We will all assist at your departure.

Hérouard.— Onward! (All leave except HÉLÈNE and MICHEL. As she goes past the latter, the COLONEL stops and says one word.) Thanks. (Then he joins the others gathered on the doorstep to assist at the ceremony of the flag. The first orders are given.—HÉLÈNE rushes outside like a mad woman. With one stride MICHEL throws himself in her path and bars her way.)

Michel.— Halt! Where are you going? (Showing the flag.) 'Tis for something one dies for! One does not insult it. (At the same moment, at the command: To the flag! The proper salute bursts forth.) HÉLÈNE falls into an armchair and remains overcome, while MICHEL gazes at the people gathered on the doorstep around the flag. As soon as honors have been paid, commands are given and the company departs. During the following scene the music is heard farther and farther away, playing martial airs. CLOTILDE and JEANNE disappear into the house. BERNARD returns and goes straight to HÉLÈNE.)

Bernard.— Mademoiselle, after such behavior I no longer know you. I give you five minutes in which to leave the house. You will find your luggage at the station. Five minutes, do you hear? (He leaves.)

SCENE XIV

MICHEL, HÉLÈNE

Hélène.— Well! In spite of you, I have what I wanted! On the sidewalk, without shelter, without bread! Will you have the courage to leave me in the street?

Michel.— What! You wished to be even more miserable than I, in order to save my life?

Hélène.— I wished to destroy your scruples. Is it done? Do you intend to take me along?

Michel.— Listen first to a terrible secret that I dared not reveal yesterday and that I can no longer conceal from you to-day. (A pause.) Do you not notice, dear Hélène, that our natures are strangely alike? We act from very different motives, you from excess of charity, I from excess of egotism; but once resolved, we have but one way to reach the end. That theft of the flag, it is the kind of trick I would resort to! Through the smallest act

Hélène Froment pierces the nature of Michel Prinson. You are brave, earnest, and mad, you are what I was at your age, with one thing added, kindness! I who fancied myself dead, I find myself in you thrilling again with youth and hope. Is it I? Is it you? I no longer know: Father and daughter are one!

Hélène (overcome).— I am afraid I understand: The likeness in our natures is not mere chance then?

Michel.— Well, of course not! You are my daughter, my own daughter, my blood!

Hélène.— The one who basely deserted my mother and me is you! Who as a child stood to me for all that is bad is you!

Michel.— I was bad! With you, I am quite a different man. You say things that stir my very soul! So now when I was despairing of ever obtaining glory, you nobly prove to me that it can be replaced by tenderness! You see those words stirred the very ashes of my heart. They brought to life a glowing ember. I have known my child only one day, and already I love her!

Hélène.— You ought to have loved her for twenty years!

Michel.— Be generous! It is really too easy to crush me! I have suffered so much! I can no more! The reasons I gave for my return were only pretexts my pride invented. In reality, I am only an exile hunting for an opening through which to slip back to humanity, like a lost dog who wanders around hamlets at night scratching at barn doors. Open to me! Bring me back among the living!

Hélène.— Not until you have gained the forgiveness of the dead!

Michel.— What dead?

Hélène.— My poor mother! I remember she was dying and I was praying at her bedside. She interrupted me as I was repeating the old formula in which we recommend to God our father and our mother: 'No, not him, not him! Only me.'

Michel.— She was delirious!

Hélène.— Yes! She no longer concealed her real feelings — if I went with you I should offend her memory.

Michel.— You would offend nothing. Does one allow oneself to be concerned by the vagaries of the sick? Your story proves that usually you were made to pray for me! I had been forgiven. Your mother —

Hélène.— Her last wish was that I should never mingle your two names.

Michel.— What! It isn't enough to have every living soul against me; but even the dead must rise from the grave to snatch my daughter from me! Well! I will fight with the dead even for my daughter. To begin with,

since she does not fall into my arms, I will be the one to open mine to her. Let them snatch her from me. (*He seizes HÉLÈNE and gives her a long embrace. Furious, she struggles and pushes him away.*)

Hélène.— Let me alone! Never again! Go back where kisses are taken by brute force — back to your blacks!

Michel.— You are fortunate not to be taken at your word; among the blacks I would kill whoever resisted me.

Hélène.— Is that a way to tell me that if I resist I shall be massacred?

Michel.— I will not allow you to play with my misery. Yesterday you insisted upon linking your life with a stranger's, and now because I am your father, you condemn me to eternal solitude. It cannot be! I am not the stuff that martyrs are made of. I wish you to go away with me. You offered — and you'll hold good!

Hélène.— No, I will not hold good.

Michel.— Take care! Till now, I've been good natured. You have tamed the ogre! Don't trust to it! The ogre is losing patience —

Hélène.— Will you always have this mania for frightening little girls? At least do wait till you are in the circus. That battlefield will be worth of you.

Michel.— Ah! You insult me, little demon! (*He falls upon her and seizes her by the throat.*) Beg my pardon or I'll strangle you. (*Thrusting her roughly upon the floor.*) On your knees! Beg, at once! For your life I beg!

Hélène (choking).— Forgive me!

Michel (shaking her violently).— My father!

Hélène (in a choking voice).— My father! (*MICHEL releases his grasp. HÉLÈNE throws her arms around his neck repeating in a vibrating voice.*) My father! I will follow you — I will obey — ah! Never mind! You compel me! I am no longer responsible. (*She bursts into tears.*)

Michel (after a long embrace).— Poor child! (*Clasping her to his breast.*) I can hear your heart thumping! (*He gazes at Hélène's hand placed over his own.*) Your hand trembles.

Hélène.— It is rage! After such a dressing!

Michel.— You are enraged and you embrace me?

Hélène.— I am both furious and happy. First of all, if I had not wished to be conquered I should have died rather than give in.

Michel.— Yes, you would have died! Your life hung by a thread!

Hélène.— I saw it in your eyes.

Michel.— My life, too, moreover. It isn't with impunity that one can speak of hope to the damned. I would have died with you before leaving here alone.

Hélène.— It is that which eases my conscience.

Michel.— Well! The moral is a good one. And this little heart is no longer beating too hard?

Hélène.— No. I am quite normal again. Give me time to put on my hat and I will go with you to the antipodes. (*She goes up to a mirror and places her hat upon her head.*)

Michel.— Without regret?

Hélène (with her hat on turns to MICHEL).— I know there will never be any forgiveness for you. We two henceforth shall be alone in the world.

BERNARD enters.)

SCENE XV

MICHEL, HÉLÈNE, BERNARD

Bernard (to MICHEL).— Are you taking her along?

Michel.— Yes.

Bernard.— I think that in this affair you have not lost anything. You arrived alone and unhappy, you leave with Hélène, who will be your consolation.

Hélène (to MICHEL).— Do not fear to wound me. Answer that after all you *do* lose something. Glory had offered you millions of souls to conquer and you conquered only the little heart of a child.

Michel (pulling his hat down over his eyes).— Let us be gone! (*He seizes HÉLÈNE by the wrist and drags her away.*)

SCENE XVI

BERNARD, CLOTILDE

BERNARD behind glass door gazes at HÉLÈNE and MICHEL leaving by the garden. CLOTILDE enters.

Clotilde.— I was watching his departure. Is he at last taking Hélène with him?

Bernard (waving toward them).— Look!

Clotilde (running toward him).— Why does he drag her along like a bird of prey? She is almost running.

Bernard.— He is running to hide his tears. He has just seen his great winged chimera flying away from him forever!

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERN- ING SHAW

BY FELIX GRENDON

WHEN Bernard Shaw was discovered by America, in 1904 during the Arnold Daly régime at the Garrick, the event did not create international commotion. That was because, in general, people abroad had grown accustomed to American discoveries of things just beginning to wear on the rest of the world, and because, in particular, Mr. Shaw had already manufactured several enviable reputations for himself in England and in the leading states of Europe. Nevertheless our magazines and newspapers have not yet desisted from the periodical announcement that the British playwright owes his recognition solely to American theatergoers, but for whose mistaken indulgence he would still be subsisting in an innocuous obscurity. To do our journalists and literators justice they firmly believe this to be the case. With their eyes reverently fixed on the masterpieces of the mid-Victorian, or some earlier epoch, they view with superior scorn any current writing which does not adumbrate the precious classics, and in their solemn determination to write, not for this age in which they live, but for all ages and for all time, they beautifully succeed in being unreadable in any age and at any time. Now when our literary tradesmen live thus engrossed in a previous generation, the American reader is put at a striking disadvantage. For when he wishes to familiarize himself with the social, political and literary forces which are vitalizing the center of civilization, that is for the present, Europe, he necessarily consults periodical writings only to find himself there confronted with opinions so antiquely flavored that even he suspects that they must have lost currency at least fifteen or twenty years ago. By this token we may expect the actual facts concerning Shaw's career to become widespread in the United States about 1920 or thereafter but in the meantime we must not be dismayed if we are persistently bombarded with such editorials as that which appeared not long ago in the New York Times, in which Mr. Shaw was impressively rebuked for his aspersion on American society and morals, and sternly reminded that his plays, books and philosophy were first popularized in the United States, to whose tolerant patronage he was altogether indebted for any vogue he might now possess.

that this view is far from being accurate a running survey of the dramatist's activities will show.

In 1876, at the age of twenty, Shaw went to London, where after some experience in electrical engineering he plunged into a literary career. From 1880-83 he wrote four novels, 'The Irrational Knot,' 'Love Among the Artists,' 'Cashel Byron's Profession,' and 'The Unsocial Socialist,' which were then unanimously rejected by the publishers of the English-speaking world, but found their way into print through the medium of obscure 'New Thought' journals maintained by the philanthropy of Mrs. Annie Besant. Following a visit of Henry George to England, Shaw took up socialism, and joining the Fabians in 1884, soon became one of their foremost writers. He developed such exceptional powers as a stump speaker and mob orator that before long he was hailed by the London press as the most dangerous agitator of the day. But this reputation had no pecuniary value, and he supported himself by writing musical criticisms for the *London Star*, from 1888 to 1890, and art reviews for the *World*, from 1890 to 1894. In the mean time the Fabians (who included such men as the poet William Morris, Sidney Webb, and H. C. Wells) had ceased to affright London journaldom. A better understanding arose of their mild, opportunist policy of gradually acquiring legitimate control of existing political machinery by permeating the middle classes with their sentiments. By 1895, therefore, when Shaw was offered the post of dramatic critic on the dignified *Saturday Review*, he had, through his activities in political, theatrical, art, musical, and literary spheres, achieved a certain notoriety which bordered closely on fame. His celebrated dramatic criticisms, since collected in two volumes as 'Dramatic Opinions and Essays,' made him at once the gibe and the admiration of the country. Penned in a boldly impressionistic manner, essay after essay was launched against the cretinous insipidity of the English theater, with its Grundys producing childish clap-trap Frenchinesses in the Sardou style, its Pineros grafting an attenuated Ibsenism on the worship of the senses, and its Augustin Dalys new-vamping an absurdly garbled Shakespeare with the latest and choicest features from the extravaganza stage. The catchwords Sardoodledom and Pinerotic, stigmatizing the two former characteristics, were products of this period. It was at this time likewise that Oscar Wilde, then at the height of his fame, pronounced Shaw one of the two leading critics in London, adding maliciously that he had many enemies, and that his friends did not really like him.

The theories which he advanced in his brilliant essays, Shaw had already applied in plays of his own. About 1890 Ibsen became the 'hero' of a new movement in the English theater, and Shaw, in partnership with

Archer, Gosse, Walkley, and others, did his share by writing the 'Quintessence of Ibsenism,' still easily the most stimulating work on the Norwegian's philosophy. But the Independent Theater, which philanthropists maintained in London, was intended primarily to cultivate a native, virile literary drama. Foreign plays to fit this formula presented themselves in ready numbers, but it was the native playwright of exceptional skill who was sought for. No such man appeared. It was in this humiliating national emergency, as Shaw himself termed it, that he invited the Independents to produce his 'Widowers' Houses.' The play was sufficiently successful to induce the author to write 'The Philanderer' and 'Mrs. Warren's Profession,' which was stupidly censored for its alleged immorality. The veriest tyro can write a Clyde Fitch, tailor-made play dealing with romantic twaddle and soft inanities; Shaw departed from the traditional fashionable drama to the extent of concentrating all his dramatic power on certain unpleasant social facts with which he brought his audiences face to face. Now an unpleasant fact is like the day of judgment: no one really wants to face it. The English public, with an instinctive dislike for the unpleasant coupled with a firm conviction that only a crackbrained fellow could see anything wrong in institutions of British creation, gave him little thanks for his trouble and paid less attention to his preachments. Shaw accordingly published his 'Unpleasant Plays' in 1897, and proceeded to tickle the palate of the indifferent theatergoers with agreeable sugar-coatings over his philosophic pills in the four 'pleasant plays,' 'Arms and the Man,' 'You Never Can Tell,' 'Candida,' and 'The Man of Destiny,' published in one volume in 1898.

In his capacity of dramatic critic, meanwhile, Shaw had wearied of his thankless Sisyphus-like task of carrying the stone of criticism up the hill of theater reform each Saturday, only to see it hurled headlong to the abyss by the trumpery performances of each following Monday. He was hastened in his resolve to leave the staff of the Saturday Review by a severe illness which nearly terminated his career, and which, he assured his readers in a valedictory article, had been consequent upon a sapping of vitality occasioned by his nightly duty of watching the stupendous imbecilities of the London stage. Thenceforth devoting his time to the furtherance of Fabianism, he wrote the 'Three Puritan Plays' in his spare moments. These received their title from their appeal to the Puritan in us all to rescue us from the sheer worship of voluptuousness and the furious idolatry of the sense into which the Victorian Theater, like its Restoration predecessor, had ignobly sunk. In pursuit of this purpose romantic themes are rigidly excluded from the Puritan plays and the case for the proposition that the

love between the sexes is not a necessary ingredient in a successful comedy substantially proved.

Late in 1902 Shaw's plays were translated into German by the Viennese dramatist, Siegfried Trebitsch, and, shortly after, Georg Brandes proclaimed him 'the most advanced of contemporary British dramatists.' Other brilliant German, Austrian, and French critics like Alfred Kerr, Herman Bahr, and M. Filon wrote penetrating critiques swelling the chorus of appreciation and praise. Under the title of 'Ein Teufelskerl' 'The Devil's Disciple' was produced at the Raimond Theater in February, 1903, 'The Man of Destiny' was given at Frankfort in the ensuing April, and 'Candida' followed at Bresden in the same year. England meanwhile was slowly awaking to the fact that the dramatist whom she had refused to take seriously was even greater than the critic whom she already much admired. Men like Mr. B. Walkley, the formidable dramatic critic of the London Times, and Mr. Gilbert K. Chesterton, the fantastically brilliant champion of conservative liberalism in literature, began to point out that the author of 'Man and Superman' was, whatever else he might not be, clearly the foremost artist-philosopher then writing in Britain. Not that the attitude of these two men was slavishly laudatory. Walkley admired Shaw's philosophy while deprecating the dramatic form in which it appeared; Chesterton admired the form and vigorously fought the philosophy. But both men paid homage to the essential genius of Shaw and large numbers of cultured people echoed approval. There was, to be sure, a furiously hostile sentiment as well. No great man appears without his guard of worshipers and crew of detractors. Indeed, we do not even suspect genius in a man until we find his attacking and defending critics in violent altercation. If discord among critics is a test of greatness, Shaw's genius need not be questioned. For England was veritably divided into two armed camps: those who were for Shaw and those who were against him. The humorous hyperbolist might say that friendships were severed, families disrupted, and parties torn asunder on the pro and con of Shaw. But it is safe to assert that the intelligent middle and upper classes were convulsed with the question, 'What do you think of Shaw?' a question that pursued the wariest man to the uttermost recesses of the social system, and was dinned into his ears in the shop and on the street, in the parlor and in the ballroom, in the country and at the seashore, while Shaw admirers on the one hand lavished the most senseless and exaggerated eulogies on all their hero said, as well as on much he never dreamt of saying; and his contemners, on the other, denounced him as cynic, immoralist, charlatan, fiend, and buffoon, scorning no weapon of scurrillity, ridicule, and abuse.

All this happened before Arnold Daly courageously rented the Berkeley Lyceum and presented 'Candida' to our astonished journalists, who were complacently oblivious to the Shavian cauldron that had been bubbling throughout civilized Europe. These gentlemen proceeded to 'discover' Shaw and ended, where they had begun, by patronizing him and pronouncing the most banal platitudes about his philosophy with such stupid reiteration that the worst cases of echolalia seem mild by comparison. The American public, left to itself, might have come to appreciate the plays of Shaw; it did, in fact, render 'Candida' and 'Man and Superman' huge successes. But our public has no intellect of its own, and it is notorious that unless it demand for sensuous gratification be supplied, it will follow its tinkling critics as blindly as the sheep follow the bellwether of the flock. Thus it was that New York theatergoers blandly tolerated the howling down of 'Mrs. Warren's Profession,' an act consummated with such reckless, vicious and filthy denunciation of the author and of the play, that Mr. John Corbin, the dean of American dramatic critics, though himself disapproving of the play, felt called upon to issue a public apology for the conduct of his colleagues, as well as a much needed defence of the freedom of the stage.

Thanks largely to the critics, 'John Bull's Other Island' was coldly received here, and no manager has since been intrepid enough to place 'Major Barbara' and 'The Doctor's Dilemma,' Shaw's latest plays, on the stage. In England, on the contrary, Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker opened the Court Theater, in the fashionable West End, with a series of Shaw's dramas. 'John Bull's Other Island' was an instantaneous and prolonged success. The opening performance was not only attended by most of the prominent literary figures in England, but by the cultured society of London with the King, Arthur Balfour, the former Conservative prime minister, Joseph Chamberlain, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the late Liberal prime minister, at the head. Shaw's two later plays were likewise produced at the court with great success, and some or all of his plays are now appearing in the principal cities of Germany and Austria and in the capitals of Denmark, Hungary, Russia, and France.

The alarming spread of the Shavian philosophy brought a curious consequence in its train. The Anti-Shawites raised the cry of 'stolen goods,' that perennial cry of the baffled, and whenever the author of 'Man and Superman' uttered a view above the mental grasp of the corner druggist they triumphantly pointed to Ibsen, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, or Tolstoi as its originator. Now Shaw would be the last man in the world to deny that he borrowed ideas. For only mediocrities shrink from frankly appropriating other people's ideas, and they always end by copying them in a

asculated and generally worthless form. The man of eminence, on the contrary, makes it his boast that he stands on the shoulders of all the eminent men preceding him. He is the inheritor of the finest thoughts of preceding ages, he assimilates these thoughts with the reflections which strike him from the changed conditions of a new generation, and gives the world a product which is novel and original mainly because it is specially adapted to his particular environment and age. In this sense Shaw has a well-defined literary ancestry, but it is not the Ibsen-Nietzsche-Schopenhauer-Tolstoyan one with which he is commonly credited. If a literary pedigree must be found for him, it can be more correctly drawn through Stuart-McCann and Belfort Bax, through William Morris and Turgenev, and through Goethe, Shelley, Blake, and Bunyan. But no sane man is likely to spend much time in such idle speculation. The merest novice in literature can pick a book to pieces and show this resemblance to Dickens, that resemblance of Swift. He may discover that the last word in the title, 'Man and Superman' is a borrowing from Nietzsche's 'Übermensch,' and conclude at once that the whole philosophy of the play is refined from the German. He could commit no more senseless error. This is an ageregnant with an aggressive individualism of which Nietzsche was one of the arch apostles, and most of us, whether we know it or not, are Nietzscheans to some degree. But in many fundamental tenets Nietzsche was anticipated by Blake, and in many others, doubtless, by still other philosophers. So that it is not difficult to credit Shaw with the truth when he asserts that his attention was not called to Nietzsche until after the publication of the 'Quintessence of Ibsenism,' in the first forty-seven pages of which the best single, if by no means comprehensive statement of the Shavian philosophy can be found. The cry of 'copy cat,' however, goes merrily on, but it does not distract the imperturbable Mr. Shaw. A recent interviewer, finding the portraits of Ibsen, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer adorning the British author's walls, commented on the fact. Shaw's bland rejoinder was that the pictures were kept there to gratify these people who insist that he borrows his ideas from the originals.

Another popular misconception concerning Shaw is that he considers Shakespeare an inferior writer and himself a superior dramatist. The fact is that Shaw himself has repeatedly contradicted this belief. With an intimate knowledge of the Shakespearian plays that make his criticisms authoritative, he is keenly alive to that lordship of language which is Shakespeare's chief eminence. 'Shakespeare's power,' he says, 'lies in his enormous command of word music, which gives fascination to his most black-bardly repartees and sublimity to his hollowest platitudes.' And again,

'In manner and art nobody can write better than Shakespeare, because he did the thing as well as it can be done within the limits of human faculty. But Shakespeare — though like Dickens and Molière an excellent photographer of human beings, a busy recorder of pregnant reflections, and an astute observer of multiform phases in human existence — fails utterly to co-ordinate his photographs, reflections, and observations into a coherent philosophy of life. And Shaw refuses to recognize that a poet who is an artist and no more can have the same value for him or for any serious man as Bunyan, Blake, Goethe, Shelley, Wagner, Morris, Tolstoi, and Nietzsche, who, as artist-philosophers, have a sense of the meaning of life and can teach others which way progress lies.

Yet Shakespeare never had an enemy who was a better friend. In the days of his dramatic criticisms Shaw waged a ceaseless warfare against shortsighted managers who, in defiance of professional decency and the demands of the artistic sense, foisted mutilated versions of Shakespearian plays upon a defenseless public. To such gentry — and the American, Augustin Dore, was a chief among them — he showed no mercy. But he similarly directed all the shafts of his penetrating wit and merciless satire against the 'Bardolatry,' so called, the acolytes of that preposterous deification of the immortal William who got on Shaw's nerves as they have on many another man since the days of Ben Jonson. For the rest, Shaw wishes it to be understood that his criticism of Shakespeare is mainly negative. In a recent letter to the writer, he says: 'My criticism of Shakespeare is too negative to be of much use except to discredit the senseless eulogies which are current. Perhaps they will lead to something positive. I read 'Measure for Measure' through carefully some time ago with some intention of saying something positive myself; but its flashes of observation were so utterly uncoordinated and so stuck together with commonplaces and reach-me-downs that I felt that the whole thing would come to pieces in my hand if I touched it; so I thought it best to leave it as he left it, and let the story and the characters hide the holes in the philosophic fabric.'

The United States is assuredly the only country in which the superstition is still current that Shaw neither takes himself seriously nor is to be taken seriously by any one else. Why it should be thought that any sane man who intended to spend a lifetime in bamboozling his fellow creatures to that end should choose to synthesize a comprehensive philosophy of life and to elaborate, intrench, and defend it in fifteen plays, a hundred criticisms, three esthetic treatises, and sundry essays on social and political economy is quite past finding out. Yet the fact remains. For in their sevenfold possession of a desperate stultiloquence, the critics of Shawism find

assumption to illogical, chimerical, or grotesque. The testimony of Morris, Walkley, Archer, Wells, Sidney Webb, and others who have toiled shoulder to shoulder with Shaw for a decade or more, counts for nothing. In one breath we are told that Shaw is the most glaring exponent of commercialism in letters, the most brazen and unscrupulous self-advertiser the history of literature has ever revealed. In the next we are loudly assured that his plays and books have never really been successful, and have never been accounted highly by any but a handful of longhaired or blue-stockinged votees. On the basis of such premises, one might timidly rejoin that Mr. Shaw must be a poor business man indeed, and that he has plainly spent twenty-five years of his life in a very unprofitable pursuit. But it is admitted that he has gained some measure of conspicuousness, although it is declared that this is sheer notoriety and nothing more. As if present notoriety were not always the foundation for future fame! Still, it is obstinately re-echoed that Shaw is a nimble-witted jester dazzling his victims with that bewildering brilliancy which enables him to transmogrify the obvious and the commonplace into the fantastic and the bizarre with as much ease as ever Midas transmuted baser metal into gold. And when he is resting from these sidious labors, he is engaged in mesmerizing the lightminded with the facile pirouettings of (so-called) half-truths and in manufacturing scintillant comedies by the simple formula of taking accepted views and restating them wrong end foremost. The fact that those who hold to this last conclusion make no attempt to out-Shaw Shaw, in view of the probable lucrativeness of the process, says not a little for their self-denial. Until they prove their point by public demonstration, however, feeble-minded Shawites will continue to regard the playwright as an intensely serious man, none the less so if his sense of humor saves him from the blundering suppositions of his opponents, and even enables him, on occasion, to view his own desperate earnestness from a whimsical perspective.

It is indeed a little strange that the surface brilliancy of the Shavian writings should blind so many to the underlying current. In all ages, wit has been the spice of style; and whether it takes the form of the paradox in the days of Shaw, of the antithetical epigram in the time of Macaulay, of the balanced click-clack in the age of Pope, or of the incorrigible punning that raged in the epoch of Shakespeare himself, is an accident of environment and time. When the charge of cynical levity so often brought against Shaw is not due to dullness in grasping the function of wit in his style, it is generally due to a complete misapprehension of his premises. For instance, at the first performance of 'How He Lied to Her Husband,' a very general cry went up that here was another evidence of the author's inconsequential if

brilliant frivolity. Was not the farce an obvious burlesque on 'Candida' itself, to say nothing of its being a skit on the sober-minded people who have been lured into taking the original play with respectful sobriety? The critic who came to this conclusion and felt the deepest resentment for the outrage on their confidences, entirely missed the point of *both* the little plays. For the dramatic conflict in 'Candida' rages between the 'higher but vaguer and timider vision . . . and the incoherent unpracticalness' of the poet who represents one of civilization's pioneers, and the clear, bold practicalness and 'sardoniously shortsighted' outlook of the priest who represents the perennial idealism of the conservative-liberal type. But the myopic spectator, whose sense appetite whetted by a long course in contemporary, voluptuous plays, could see nothing more in 'Candida' than a struggle between the pretty heroine's head and heart, than her sinful vacillation between a husband who needed her devotion and an eighteen year old lover who was only awaiting the signal to throw himself into her arms. And when these spectators, on the basis of their romantic assumptions, not only rushed to the conclusion that the play was nothing more nor less than an incitement to every honest man to develop a passion for some other man's wife, but even proceeded to applaud this imaginary exhortation, who could blame the author if he pitied them in his admirable pasquinade?

A common criticism of Shaw's plays is that they are not plays at all. This position is usually supported by the assertion that they have a paucity of action and a proportionate superfluity of talk. Mr. Shaw himself does not 'deny the impeachment.' What no one has successfully shown to be a fault he has flatly declared a virtue by announcing each of his later plays as 'a discussion' or 'a conversation' in so many acts or parts.* We need not here be concerned with the playwright's iconoclasm in matters of technique. He repudiates the outworn conventions of his art as natural as he establishes new and more serviceable canons: since he could not otherwise serve in liberating the social organism from its present chrysalis state and thus prove a precursor of the higher civilization. But in the detail of action his departure from the tradition of the master dramatists is far from radical. Talk has been the essential ingredient of dramatic works from the dialogues of Sophocles to the 'histories' of Shakespeare and from the comedies of Molière to the static dramas of Maeterlinck. When critics condemn the Shavian plays because the action is lacking or insufficient, they cannot help condoling with them for their evident obsession by the elementary physical meaning involved in the term *performance*. In the days of savagery, to do was to walk, to climb, to pursue, and above all, to fight.

*Witness "The Doctor's Dilemma: A Discussion in Three Acts," and "Getting Married: A Conversation."

These more cultured times, the tongue is mightier than the fist. A thousand complex ends are accomplished, and a tremendous, intricate social machinery is controlled by foresight and insight, by plan and design. And these, talk is the effective instrument. Battles are won by orders pronounced in boards of strategy a thousand miles from the seat of war, empires are governed by debates in caucus, families are disrupted by a taunt or a sneer, and the mighty are exalted to still higher seats and those of low degree are more put down by the bidding of brokers on exchange. What, then, do the critics want? The capering of ghosts through enchanted ruins, the clash of swords in a duello, the loud hurrah of intoxicated mobs, the guilty step behind the concealing screen, or the titillating click of military heels? They cannot really want these antiquated paraphernalia: they would certainly be the first to jeer them off the contemporary stage if any one imbecile enough could be found to put them on. As to the conflict of character and circumstance which is the real stuff of drama — there is plenty of that in law. Every one of his plays presents the struggle which arises between conscience and conduct when the bitterly unromantic facts of life tear down the veil of romantic illusions. That is just the sort of conflict which motivates 'King Lear,' who assumes that his pseudo-operatic ideal of filial affection corresponds with life, so that when he is confronted with the stern actuality of his daughters' sentiments, he strives to combat the real on the basis of his illusory ideal and perishes in the fatuous attempt.

The methods by which the most flagrant misconceptions concerning our great men gain worldwide currency are perfectly familiar to the analytically gifted. We live in an age in which the only liberty not seriously endangered is the liberty of ignorance. Let a man be amiably ignorant on a special subject and costume his emptinesses in words expressive of great moral ardor, and he is not only tolerated, but is accepted as a leader of 'advanced' or 'enlightened' thought. Such leaders view with suspicion the serious achievements of a unique, epochal writer. Too timid to investigate his ideas — which would render their leadership no good — they hide their terror in estimates of the author and judgments of the man, all as diverse and misrepresentative as the makers of them are numerous and inept. The chaos of discordant criticism, it is true, serves but to emphasize the harmonious unity of the genius. The very legends which are sown to choke his personality, prove actually destructive and furnish nutriment for his fame. Not that this unexpected issue at all disconcerts those apostles of forlorn hopes, the leaders of the great bourgeoisie. Even the gods in all their splendor cannot dazzle the blind. And so with those dignified gentlemen who cultivate literature and the classics in the Academic Glades where Universal Wisdom is reputed

to reign, and who can be persuaded to pause from their onslaught on Bacon and other fantasies of old, only long enough to join hands with the Shavian mythmakers of to-day. They will continue to measure the contemporary stage with the yard stick of Freytag's analyses and Aristotle's poetics; and when they examine the technic of the drama of Shaw and find in it elements new to the playmaking craftsmanship, they will turn to the busts of Molière, Shakespeare, and Aristophanes with gasps of eloquent horror. In short, they will often repeat but never perceive that it is the business of genius to turn man's back on the past and his face to the future, and that the formula of each epoch-making artist must of necessity be different from all previous formulas, and therefore strange and startling to the epoch itself. This is a truth which each possessor of the 'inspiring fire' seeks to force upon the public that does not want to learn. His reward is that he is called a naïf, a fanatic like Ibsen, a pain-crazed madman like Nietzsche, or an inveterate jester like Shaw. He can only retort that his work is there like an open book for him who has eyes to see and brains to understand. Thus the sceptic is invited to penetrate the surface brilliancy of Shaw to the substantial kernel beneath. Or let him chew Shaw's Fabian tracts, digest the 'Preface to Politicians,' and assimilate the well-fed book on 'The Common Sense of Municipal Trading.' Then, if he does not feel the tremendous earnestness of the dramatist-philosopher, his case will be hopeless indeed, and he may with a double significance, cry 'jester' to the last syllable of recorded time. At Shaw's egoism in expression only the congenitally captious will cavil. Even Shakespeare proclaimed that not marble nor the gilded throne of princes should outlive his powerful rime. And Shaw does not ask for that sort of fame! He sees the danger in great reputations, recognizes that these are the shackles which fetter us to the past. But if in hurrying us onward he points confidently to his own figure striding in advance, who shall deny him that privilege? Besides, the professionally humble are not more often the secret megalomaniacs than the frankly outspoken egoist is the essentially considerate man. And the testimony of many co-workers proclaims that Shaw has refused to maintain the supercilious aloofness and supercilious reserve which the merely talented man is so apt to assume. So that if to his lofty egotheism he joins an intelligent generosity, we must allow that this union adds piquancy to those versatile achievements which make him a figure in the great dance of life that delights and inspires the thoughtful spectator.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF 'THE NUT-BROWN MAID'

BY EUGENE C. DOLSON

THERE is something about the old ballad of 'The Nut-brown maid'—something so simple and natural, and, at the same time so suggestive of refinement, that it seems to stand quite apart from all other English verse of the fifteenth century. Its simplicity separates it widely on one hand from the scholarly but stilted and pedantic work of such writers as Lydgate and Skelton, and on the other hand, its polish separates it from the popular ballad poetry of that era. Its author, evidently a person of culture, knew the value of simply expressed language.

'The Nut-brown Maid' was first published anonymously in 'Arnold's Chronicle,' about the year 1502. There seems to be no earlier trace of this poem. Who wrote it has never been known and scarcely guessed at. Professor Morley states that some have been inclined to believe, from internal evidence, that this poem is the work of a lady.

Has any one, I wonder, ever thought of attributing this fine relic of ancient poetry to Sir Thomas More? In a footnote in 'Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature' a specimen of Sir Thomas More's juvenile poetry is given, and its resemblance to 'The Nut-brown Maid,' in rhyme, meter, and the peculiar swing and sound of the verse, is striking indeed. Try these two poems with the ear, and they sound as nearly alike as two of Winburne's poems sound alike.

And the measure in which they were written, with rhymes in the middle of the lines, was not by any means common in those days. It was not used by any one of the three hundred and ten pieces in 'Tottel's Miscellany,' our earliest poetical anthology, which was first published in 1557, and contains the better part of all the poetry of sentiment from that date back to 1500.

Let us take an extract from the poem which 'Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature' acknowledges to have been written by Sir Thomas More:

'He that hath lafte the hosier's crafte,
And fallth to makyng shone;

The smyth that shall to painting fall,
 His thrift is well nigh done.
 A man of law that never sawe
 The wayes to buy and sell,
 Wenying to ryse by merchandyse,
 I pray God spede him well.
 A merchaunt eke, that will go seke
 By all the means he may,
 To fall in sute till he dispute
 His money cleans away;
 Pletying the lawe for every straw
 Shall prove a thrifty man,
 With bate and strife, but by my life
 I cannot tell you whan.'

Compare this with the first stanza of 'The Nut-brown Maid':

'Be it right or wrong, these men among
 On women do complaine;
 Affyrming this, how that it is
 A labour spent in vaine
 To love them wele, for never a dele
 They love a man againe;
 For lete a man do what he can
 Their favour to attayne,
 Yet, yf a newe do them pursue,
 Their first trew lover than
 Laboureth for nought; for from her thought
 He is a banysshed man.'

More, born in 1480, was twenty-two years of age when 'The Nut-brown Maid' was first published. In his youth he wrote considerable verse. I have a copy of Ritson's 'Bibliographia Poetica,' an old book, printed 1802. From this volume I copy a list of More's poems, all of which appear to have been written about the time that 'The Nut-brown Maid' was given to the public. In recording the titles of these poems Ritson seems careful to have retained the old spelling and use of capitals as he found them in the early printed copies and manuscripts. This in itself is sufficiently interesting, and I shall not attempt to make changes. Here is his summary of More's work in verse:

'Sir Thomas More wrote, in his youth 1. "A mery iest how a sergea

could learne to play the frere." 2. "Verses over nine pageants devised
his father's house in London." 3. "A ruful lamentacion of the deth of
quene Elisabeth mother to king Henry the eight, wife to king Henry the
seventh, & eldest doughter to king Edward the fourth, which quene dyed,
childbed, in February in the yere of our lord 1503, & in the 18 yere of the
reigne of king Henry the seventh:" 4. "Certain meters in English
written in hys youth for the boke of fortune, and caused them to be printed
at the begynning of that boke:" 5. "Twelve rules of John Picus earle of
Mirandula, partely exciting, partely directing a man in spiritual bataile:"
"The twelve weapons of spirituall battaile, which every manne should
have at hand when the pleasure of a sinnfull temptation commeth to his
ruinde:" 7. "The twelve properties or condicions of a louer:" 8. "A
traier of Picus Mirandula unto god:" all of which are printed in his English
works, 1557.'

Probably some of the poems here enumerated are still extant in public
and private libraries. Whether in any of them we might discover a similarity
to 'The Nut-brown Maid' I can only conjecture. Sir Thomas More holds
a high and unique place among the prose writers of his generation in Eng-
land, and the same traits which distinguished his 'Utopia' from the work
of other authors of that time were doubtless in some degree characteristic
of his now forgotten poems. The specimen of his verse from which I have
quoted is not in itself important; but its resemblance in sound and structure
to 'The Nut-brown Maid' inspires in me the hope some day to see more of
his work in verse.

SOME ESSENTIALS OF LITERARY APPRECIATION

BY ETHEL ALLEN MURPHY

ONCE upon a time,' in a fortunate hour, I found myself member of a 'Tennyson' class, under a teacher of much delicacy, sincerity, and insight. It is not, however, of the illumination of the poems studied that I want to speak in this paper, but of some sidelights which glanced from teacher and class upon questions of criticism and literary appreciation.

From comments and questions put forth by the class, it appeared most strikingly, how prone are most readers to lay upon the poet the onus of their own foregathered opinions, dogmas, or theories. Here they read into his experience their peculiar views, there they quarreled with him because they could not read them in.

One said, quoting a commentator,— 'There is no *proof* that Tennyson believed in Christ as the divine Son of God.' One queried, 'What is the meaning of the "larger hope" in this line,

"And faintly trust the larger hope"?

Does it not mean the hope of universal salvation?' In answer, Tennyson's own explanation of the line was read, and found to be almost as vague as the line itself, in which there is nothing positive but the 'feeling.' It was further explained that the 'larger hope' cannot well be defined by virtue of its very largeness. 'Yes,' said the questioner triumphantly, 'I see. It means universal salvation. I thought so.' Another said, 'In group XXXIII, does he not put faith above reason? I don't think faith is higher than reason. I think reason is highest of all.'

So we all had our say, until one striving to lead to an interpretation of the poem must often have felt driven back upon silence in the face of the apparent impossibility of reconciling everything in it with every other thing or with the bias and prejudgment of every mind, and of persuading the readers to hold in abeyance their prejudgments until the poetry could have a chance.

The truth seems to be, that we must come to literature unprejudiced and receptive to all impressions, open to all suggestions, if we are to get the li

and soul of it. Literature is an art which by its very nature cannot express itself in terms of the isolated and absolute. It is the vibrant reflex of images in perpetual elusion. It exists because it *had* to be. The writer wrote it to get rid of it,— with or without apologies. At its greatest it is its own apology.

The joy of literature lies in the moment of rapturous 'recognition or surprise,' in the ecstatic thrill of a momentary and perpetual correspondence. That it does not *rest* upon the moment. This joy must perpetually renew, advance, and justify itself, and at the last we must have left a residuum of abiding and uplifting feeling, a sense of rightness and of wholeness, in the light of which each of the momentary joys takes on larger validity, permanence, and significance. To take a homely illustration, — the effect is somewhat like the wholeness attained by the rapid, flashlike movement of the many little picture bits in the 'moving pictures' of to-day.

In its oneness it comes to make the same appeal to us as the loved one makes, — for what it *is*. In this it has a certain positive and absolute quality. Comparison may help us to appreciate this 'what it is,' but it should not serve to destroy the appeal made from the central absoluteness of essential quality. We may profitably compare Milton and Tennyson, for instance, but we should not condemn one for not being like the other, any more than we would condemn a birch for not being an oak, a stream for not being a mountain peak. At the same time we need not shut our eyes to questions of relative greatness.

We note, as part of the wonder of Christ, that all sects cite him, swear by him, whereas he said, in perhaps a larger sense than we usually find in the words, 'Swear not at all.' I, myself, may point my own moral, — for am I not doing just what I have noted in others, turning the facts as far as I can to push my point? Great literature, however, I mean to say, has some of this same quality that Christ's life has, — it lends itself to many minds and seems to burgeon afresh with every acquisition of knowledge, thought, feeling, or experience on the reader's part. The greater the art, the more its correspondences, reaching out and touching on all sides, life, and people, and beyond all, what we recognize but cannot always define, 'the eternal verities.'

Literature, like people, must be taken 'in good faith,' we might even go so far as to say, 'must be assumed to be *right* until proven wrong.' Above all, if the writer asks that we accept his work from a certain view, we must courteously try putting ourselves at that viewpoint with him, or we will not see together. When Jane Austen tells us that she is not going to paint a battlepiece but a miniature, it would be unreasonable and absurd

to look for giant conflict, crowded canvases, and heroic forms. It is, change the figure, somewhat like reading the thermometer. We must be careful to avoid parallax. We must look at the reading neither from above nor from below the point — or the figures will be too high or too low.

When Tennyson tells us, in words which re-echo in other stanzas,—

‘ I falter where I firmly trod
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world’s altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

‘ I stretch lame hands of faith and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope,’—

when he tells us this, we have come as close as we can to the heart of his ‘feeling’ of such things. And we have a sufficiently clear and strong statement of his ‘purpose’ when we read these stanzas:

‘ If these brief lays, of sorrow born,
Were taken to be such as closed
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn.

‘ Her care is not to part and prove,—
She takes, when harsher moods remit,
What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love.’

For the rest,—how much of the deep, true music of ‘these lays’ we are really hear depends on ‘the open heart.’

As that last significant line would indicate, *love* must enter in as the most vital of all elements in our interpretation, appreciation, criticism of literature, a happy love, questing at will through all the realms and borderlands of thought widening about the writer’s treatment, yet always returning to the central theme, enriched for feeling and comprehension.

Now I believe that I love literature. I feel in it something of the rapture that breathes from the presence of one beloved. Yet here there is danger of the Pharisaic attitude, ‘Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other

en.' So in our attitude toward literature, we need humility. Above all, we must keep a perpetual fine balancing of forces and attitudes, ever holding ready to lend ourselves to the rhythm, the swing of the thought and feeling, ever seeking reverently to *comprehend* in its very essence the thing before us.

SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO

A Study Program

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER AND HELEN A. CLARKE

ACT I

Topic.— *Iago's Grievance; Desdemona's Choice.*

Hints:— In what does the action of the first act of the play consist? Show that the events of the act are Cassio's appointment to the lieutenancy, Desdemona's elopement, and the Ottoman expedition, but that these are not so important in themselves to the plot as their effects are to it. The effect of the appointment on Iago, and of the elopement on Roderigo and Brabantio, for example, occupy the first scenes, and the main dramatic use of them seems to be to exhibit Iago's malice. So also the news of the Ottoman expedition, which brings about the scene in the ducal council chamber, is the means by which the circumstances and nature of Desdemona's love for Othello is revealed. Iago's grievance is one element in this act which promises to be of direct importance in shaping the coming tragedy. Desdemona's choice is the other more passive but equally necessary element of the plot. On it the first more active element will base its operation. What signs are there in Act I that Cassio and Roderigo, lying outside of these two elements of the story as they do, are to be woven into it through the interaction of these two main factors? Show how Roderigo is first made Iago's instrument, and in how far it appears in this act that Cassio, and even Othello, will submit to the same mastery. Notice, too, that doubt of Desdemona's constancy in her choice is a necessary starting-point in Iago's plan of action, not only for the accomplishment of his own ends, but also for his entanglement of both Roderigo and Othello. Why is Iago right in his estimate of Othello, and wrong in his estimate of Desdemona? Was Desdemona's love for Othello likely to prove more, or less, lasting, because she saw Othello's 'visage in his mind'?

Points:— 1. 'Strike on the tinder, ho! Give me a taper.'— What sort of matches were in use in Venetian and in Elizabethan days? 2. 'What drugs, what charms,' etc. Love potions and charms. 3. 'That I would all my pilgrimage dilate.' Give an account of some of the discoveries of new and strange lands in Shakespeare's time. 4. A sketch of Venice. 5. 'I

voice potential and double as the Duke's.' The power and position of a Venetian senator.

Topic for Debate.—Is it apparent in Act I that the love of Desdemona and Othello holds within itself the promise of a violent future?

ACT II

Topic.—*Iago's Net.*

Hints:—Tell the story of Iago's stratagem to implicate Cassio in disorder and disgrace. Note the double meaning of much of the dialogue considered as adding to the diversion of the audience and enabling it to find pleasure of an intellectual and satiric sort, in the evil machinations of Iago. For example, where Iago says to Cassio, 'I think you think I love you,' and Cassio replies, 'I have well approved it,' the apparent and the real sense present an amusing contrast, and also advance the action. While pleasure of this sort lightens the tragedy and interests one from the maker's point of view in the weaving of the plot, does it make one sympathize at all with Iago? Discuss the importance of the drunken scene and its effects on the plot of the whole play.

Points:—1. Collect and explain unusual words in Act II as 'trash,' 'equinox,' etc. 2. 'He'll watch the horologue a double set.' Describe a horologue. 3. The songs introduced in Act II and their music. (See Percy's 'Reliques English Poetry.') 4. Venice and Cyprus and their historical connection.

Topic for Debate:—Can it be shown from this act that Shakespeare was averse to drinking? How may such an opinion be upheld by passages in other plays?

ACT III

Topic.—*Othello Enmeshed.*

Hints:—Show what parts of Iago's trap are newly originated in this act, and what parts are further developed. Is Desdemona's loyal and faithful nature still a factor in his schemes? Show how her quality of performing 'to the last article' when she vows a friendship (scene iii, 21) helps Iago. What other quality assists him? Note her lack of moral courage. Collect all instances of these qualities and trace their effect on the action. How much does Iago's ability to convince Othello depend upon his (Iago's) good repute? How many people praise Iago in the course of the play? Trace Emilia's share in Iago's plan to ensnare Othello. Show how far

Othello's own nature is responsible for Iago's success. What is the climax of this act, and how is that climax marked?

Points:—1. Was Othello fond of music? Collect and compare references bearing on this question. What appropriateness would there be in making him like or dislike music? 2. Reconcile Cassio's inquiry as to whom Othello had married, I, ii, 52, with III, iii, 71. 3. Explain the imagery and meaning of III, iii, 260.—'If I do prove her haggard,' etc. 4. Reconcile the two different stories Othello tells about the handkerchief. 5. Explain allusions, —'the Pontic Sea,' 'dye'd in mummy,' etc.

Topic for Debate:—Which is the strongest element of Iago's success in ensnaring Othello,—his cunning tongue, his circumstantial evidence, Cassio's weakness, Desdemona's duplicity, Othello's jealous nature, or his race humility?

ACT IV

Topic.—*Venice Interposes.*

Hints:—In telling the story of Act IV observe how all the new matter introduced in this act which refers to Iago's schemes is merely confirmatory of them and does not materially advance the action, the deaths of Cassio and Desdemona having been already determined upon. Show what the occurrences of Act IV do effect, and what it is that Shakespeare accomplishes by the introduction of Lodovico's embassy? Does this interposition of Venice seem commanding as it does Othello's return and deposing Cassio in his stead? Does it seem to promise the frustration of peril from Desdemona and Cassio? Or does it in fact precipitate the resolution of Iago and of his dupe to act again against their victims the very same night? Show Shakespeare's clever double use of it in both these ways, and how it both delays and precipitates the plot. Notice the effect of the embassy upon Othello in arousing his suspicion that Desdemona and Venice are in league with Cassio and against him. Trace its effect also in exciting his public outbreak against his wife. Does Desdemona guess how Othello will construe Lodovico's embassy? What is its effect upon Iago and Roderigo? Observe that Desdemona seeks to disarm Othello's suspicions as to her part in mission of Lodovico. Consider the closing scene of Act IV as ominous of the catastrophe to be brought about in the following act, and also as inducing the right spirit of apprehensive dread and pity in the audience.

Points:—1. Origin of the Willow Song and its music. 2. Explain allusions to 'joint rings,' 'crocodile's tears,' etc.

Topic for Debate.—Why are the most circumstantial arguments for

Othello's suspicion of his wife given in Act IV when he is already convinced of her infidelity?

ACT V

Topic.— *Iago's Schemes Succeed and Fail.*

Hints.— Scene i shows Iago performing in his peculiar, indirect manner his share in Othello's vengeance as agreed upon between them. It depicts him, moreover, as working out a special scheme of his own against Roderigo and Bianca. Discuss his motives and means in these under-plots, and the use of them in the play. Do they help the action? Or show character? How is this first scene linked to the second wherein Othello carries out his part of the agreement with Iago against Desdemona? Is it shown to have any effect on Othello's action? Why did Othello resolve to strangle Desdemona? Was it his own idea? Did she guess the truth when she cried, 'O, my fear interprets,' etc.? If so, why did she not explain at once? Why does she cry out when she hears later that Cassio is not killed? Notice how Emilia as well as Desdemona guesses the truth now. What purpose could Shakespeare have had in killing off Brabantio,— is it to preclude any possible misunderstanding of Othello's recall to Venice as issuing from Desdemona's father? Notice that Othello's hearsay and circumstantial evidence as to the handkerchief is brought forward in justification of his act to others. Is it a defect in the *denouement* that the overheard interview with Bianca is never explained? What best serves to convince Othello that he has been gulled,— Emilia's statement that she stole the handkerchief at Iago's wish, Iago's own conduct, or Emilia's dying testimony?

Points.— 1. Costume of the play. 2. Of what race was Iago, what signs of it, what appropriateness in making him so? 3. Why is the Turk spoken of as a 'circumcised dog'? Did his nation practise circumcision like the Jews? 4. Was it legal and customary in Venetian days for a husband to execute his wife for infidelity? How was it in Elizabethan England?

Topics for Debate.— Is Iago or Othello the truly tragic figure of the play? Is Iago destitute of conscience?

ACT VI. CHARACTER STUDIES

Topic.— *A Study of Othello as Husband.*

Hints.— Compare with Leontes in 'The Winter's Tale,' and Posthumus in 'Cymbeline.' Observe all differences and likenesses in the circumstances and the incitation to jealousy of the three husbands. Which wife

gives the most excuse to suspicion? Which husband is the least tyrannical? The husband whose jealousy was the least defensible — Leontes — is the only one to make any show of legal procedure. How would you explain that fact? Is it due to Leontes' superiority over Othello that this is so; Hermione's rank as an emperor's daughter; or to the circumstance that the story on which 'The Winter's Tale' is founded belongs to a stage of civilization less arbitrary in its treatment of woman? Scepticism as to the worth of a woman and of her capacity to love might be shown to be the source of the tragedy in the three plays. What are the main differences in the modes of the tempters, Iago and Iachimo, in gaining an ascendancy over their dupes? Consider the play of 'Othello' as consisting in the struggle of a masculine and egoistic will, represented by Iago, for the supremacy over a feminine and altruistic passivity, represented by Desdemona, the stage of the struggle being the heart of Othello.

Topic for Debate.—Is Othello's jealousy such as belongs peculiarly to the representation of a Moor, or is it not intended to have any special racial quality?

ACT VII. CHARACTER STUDIES

Topic.—*Emilia: Her Inferiority and Superiority to Her Mistress.*

Hints.—Consider whether the contrast usually drawn between the 'white-souled Desdemona' and the 'gross-thoughted, mercenary, lax-principled Emilia' is quite accurate. Warrant may be found for it on the one side, and, on the other side, excuse for Emilia can be found also, although it is not often brought forward. Is her action throughout the play better than her speech in IV, iii? Is it possible that Desdemona's meekness under injustice exasperated her, aroused her own sense of justice and revolt against marital supremacy? Are Emilia and Othello guilty of the relations with each other of which Iago speaks? Does she guess Iago's hand in her mistress's troubles before she understands Iago's use of the handkerchief which she stole for him, V, ii, 217, etc.? Her loyalty to Desdemona at the expense of her husband argues her disinterestedness and nobility. Can you imagine Desdemona equally faithful to another woman or to justice at Othello's expense?

Topic for Debate.—Do Emilia's greater knowledge and experience of the world and her impersonal action at the close of the play mark her as a more advanced type of woman than Desdemona is?

ART

BY THEOPHILE GAUTIER

Translated in the original meter by F. C. Evans

YES, those works are truly best,
That in stuff perverse and hard
Are expressed;
Verse, enamel, marble, sard.

False conventions never heed:
But as means to walk aright,
Thou hast need,
Oh, muse, to fit thy buskin tight.

And the obvious rhyme despise;
Easy as a worn-out shoe,
For any size
Of foot that might be made to do.

Sculptor, shun the facile clay,
That the thumb can mould with skill,
While away
The thoughts go wand'ring at their will.

Labor in the marble, hard
Carrara and the Parian rare;
They will guard
For aye the contours pure and fair;

Borrow from old Syracuse
Her lasting bronze, that for all time,
With strength endues
The stroke exquisite or sublime;

With a hand precise and slow,
In a vein of agate, hollow
 An intaglio
Of the profile of Apollo.

Painter, the frail grace refuse
Of water color; rather aim
 To fix thy hues
In th' enamellor's fierce flame;

Make in this wise on the rocks
Sirens braiding ceaselessly
 Their blue locks;
Make the beasts of heraldry;

In a triple nimbus robe
The virgin and her infant son;
 Shape the globe
With the golden cross thereon.

All things perish. Art alone
Has eternity. The bust
 Still is shown,
When the city long is dust.

And the medal chastely graved,
A ploughman chanced to disinter,
 Oft has saved
The memory of an emperor.

The high gods themselves are slain,
 But the lords of poetry
 Still remain,
When the bronze has ceased to be.

Carve and polish, that thy thought
(Seeming creature of a day)
 May be caught
Into forms that ne'er decay.